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THE  
SORROWS OF GENTILITY.

BY  
GERALDINE E. JEWSBURY,

AUTHOR OF  
"CONSTANCE HERBERT," "MARIAN WITHERS,"  
&c. &c.

"George Dandin vous l'avez voulu."—MOLIÈRE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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## THE SORROWS OF GENTILITY.

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### CHAPTER I.

IN spite of Mrs Morley's exhortations, Gertrude *was* afraid of her father, and could not feel at her ease with him. When she met him the next morning, she was stiff and constrained, though she tried to be natural, and did her best to think of things to talk to him about. As might be expected, she was unsuccessful, and he not unnaturally set down her embarrassment to conceit and "fantastic pride." Luckily breakfast was not long about ; for Simon Morley had to go to a distant part of the farm, and Mrs Morley had plenty of busi-



ness before her, to make preparations to receive her son and his wife, who were coming over from Dunnington to spend Sunday with them, not having been able to come on Christmas-day. Simon Morley had just got into his heavy great-coat, and was on the point of starting, when the baby was brought in by the nurse. Gertrude took it from her, and bringing it up to her father, said:—"Won't you look at her? She was asleep last night, and you could not see what she was like."

This would not have been a bad move, but the smart London look of the nurse struck him with displeasure; however, he took the child in his arms and kissed it; the poor baby, unused to such rough kissing and such a strange figure, began to cry, which was unfortunate. The grandfather gave it impatiently back to the nurse with the observation that "It was very marred," and then, without saying more, mounted his rough-looking pony, and set off to inspect his farm.

Mrs Morley was called off to the kitchen, where the sound of the chopping-knife, and the beating up of eggs, mingled with the dying screams of the murdered poultry ; for Sunday was to be a very grand festival, not only celebrating the visit of her son and his wife, but also the restoration of her daughter to her father's house.

Gertrude was very anxious to be allowed to assist her mother ; but Mrs Morley, who fancied that having forced her daughter to assist her in the bar had been the one great fault and mistake in her bringing up, and the cause of all the unhappiness and estrangement that followed, was determined to profit by experience, and now refused to allow her daughter to lay a finger to anything, or to assist her in the smallest employment, not even in paring apples or stoning raisins. She was either to sit in the parlour and amuse herself, or else be up-stairs with baby in the "best room," which Mrs Morley had given up for a nursery.

Mrs Morley considered that it was only by treating Gertrude "quite as a lady," that she could make her happy and contented, and prevent her thinking of running away again. She had also the fond idolatrous feeling that many mothers have for their daughters, which leads them to work like slaves to save the daughter from the necessity of stirring hand or foot; they would make a dozen journeys from the garret to the cellar, sooner than see their daughter obliged to walk across the room.

It is a very false and ill-judged mode of showing affection; it reverses the order of nature, and it induces an habitual indolent self-indulgence, which though it may have its rise in a thoughtless acquiescence, does not fail to be as evil in its influence on the character, as indolence and self-indulgence, by their own nature, must be.

It was no fault of Gertrude's that she was found by her father, on his return, sitting nicely dressed in the parlour, and making up

a lace cap, whilst her mother was looking red and hot from standing over the fire in the kitchen. The cap was intended for her mother, as a surprise to her on Sunday ; but Simon Morley did not know this, and he thought "it was only of a piece with the rest of her conceit to keep a nurse to look after her child, whilst she sat quite grand in the parlour, sewing fal-lals of satin and make-believe flowers."

In the afternoon things went a little better : Simon Morley always took a nap after dinner, and as there was of necessity a cessation of industry in the kitchen whilst the servants dined, Mrs Morley took Gertrude over the cottage, which was literally as well as figuratively her household god.

She had never been above keeping an inn ; and whilst she administered the affairs of the Mettingham Arms she had felt a pride in it, and considered it a house that might stand comparison with the best ; still to retire from business, and live in a private house on their

own land, was decidedly a rise in the world.

"It is not a grand place," said she, "but it is warm and comfortable. I could not bear the old place after you left, all looked so changed; your father bought this to please me, but I should have been quite lost in it for want of something to do if it had not been for the thoughts of making it comfortable and as you would like it if you came back to us. I never had a nail knocked up but I thought of thee, and that some day, may-be, I should go round with thee and show it thee."

"— You are a deal too good to me, mother, and I don't deserve to be treated so kindly. I would not go over the house by myself this morning, I waited for you."

Mrs Morley thought that no mother had ever been blessed with so kind and good a daughter in this world before.

The cottage was really as pretty a place as could be seen on a summer's day, and even in the depth of winter it looked peculiarly cosy

and comfortable. It was a low, white building—the approach to which was by the “fore-drift,” down which they had driven the previous evening, which terminated in a farm-yard, with the usual out-buildings. A porch entrance, covered in the summer with honeysuckle and jessamine, led into a hall with a red-tiled floor, on one side of which was the kitchen before-mentioned.

The hall was the place where Simon Morley stored his fowling-pieces and powder-flasks, and whips of every description; whilst his great-coats were hung on pegs against the walls—which were also ornamented with sundry pictures and some pieces of embroidery done by Gertrude when at school; they had been the admiration of all beholders, and universally deemed worthy of being framed and glazed. A bureau of oak clamped with brass, a large dining-table of walnut wood, with innumerable legs, and sundry heavy chairs, of the same material, with black leather seats, stood against the walls, and seemed to defy any undertaking

to remove them. A looking-glass, in a carved black frame, surmounted with peacock's feathers, slanted from the wall over the fire-place, which was filled with holly; and a large corner cupboard, with glass doors, was filled with Mrs Morley's best glass and china.

Beyond the hall was the parlour, raised above it by a single step—a small, comfortable, but somewhat stuffy room, furnished in an old-fashioned homely style. Two large arm-chairs stood on each side of the fire-place; beside Mrs Morley's chair stood a spider-legged table, on which her knitting lay, whilst a slab fastened to the tall wooden chimney-piece, on her father's side, held his tobacco-box and spectacles. Here the worthy couple used to sit opposite to each other when they were not otherwise engaged, and every night they smoked their pipe together; for Mrs Morley smoked as well as her husband; and whoever had seen them sitting there would have thought that they looked very comfortable. Portraits of Mr and Mrs Morley hung against the wall, and

the likeness of his striped waistcoat and of her best cap was very striking indeed.

A glass door in the hall opened upon a large coach-wheel grass-plot, which was just under the parlour-window. The garden was a large one, and laid out in the old English fashion of long gravel walks, edged with box, and leading to an alcove summer-house which stood on a mount opposite to the house. Gertrude was earnest in her expressions of admiration.

"It is a very pretty place in summer, though you cannot judge of it now. We have plenty of flowers and roses growing all over the front of the house, and climbing into the windows. It is too cold for you to see the dairy and those places; but come upstairs and let us see the baby. A little darling! it is the best and sweetest child I ever saw—just reminds me of what you used to be at that age."



## CHAPTER II.

At length Sunday morning came. It was a fine, clear frosty morning, and the window-panes were covered with fairy landscapes in hoar frost. Gertrude presented the cap she had made to surprise her mother, who was delighted with it; but still more pleased that Gertrude had worked a watch-paper in coloured silks for her father, who received the offering graciously enough; it explained, in some degree, Gertrude's occupation, of which he had judged so hardly.

By eleven o'clock, Simon Morley, junior, and his wife and child drove up in one of

the Mettingham chaises; he had grown very stout and florid, and wore drab small-clothes, and white stockings; an immense gold chain and a bunch of seals dangled at his fob.

He was very much surprised to see Gertrude, of whose arrival he had not heard; he greeted her affectionately, and with more gentleness than formerly, and introduced his wife to her, bidding them become acquainted as sisters ought to be. The babies were then introduced to each other, which was not very successful, for they both began to cry.

Simon Morley speedily took possession of his son, to get his opinion of a new cart-horse and some stock he had recently bought.

The ladies retired to the nursery. Mrs Morley, indeed, could give them but a very divided attention; for she had continually to look after things down-stairs.

The two sisters-in-law did not get on very well together: of the two, Gertrude

almost preferred Miss Sophia. Mrs Simon Morley, junior, was rather good-looking, but with an expression which was somewhat repelling; she was very silent and composed in her manners, though she gave the idea of being constantly on the watch to pass judgment upon everything; added to this, a peculiar mode of holding her head gave her the air of being constantly offended and displeased. She was extremely silent, and it was next to impossible to draw her into conversation. She was very handsomely dressed in a black satin cloak and a crimson silk dress, very much trimmed.

The baby, which was a stout, chubby boy, looked like the knave of clubs, in a seal-skin cap and gold band, with an enormous cockade of the finest lace on the side of his cap. Still Mrs Simon had not that comfortable sense of superiority over Gertrude to which she felt she had a right after what she had heard of her run-away match, to a man not worth a farthing. Simon Morley

had told his son about Mr Augustus Donnelly's early application to him for money, and the son had naturally told his wife.

Gertrude was dressed much more plainly than Mrs Simon; but then her dress, made by herself, had a very superior style about it;—to be sure, something might be owing to Gertrude's graceful figure, but her sister-in-law was not likely to own that to be a reason. Then, too, she felt envious and annoyed to see the splendid worked frock and the silver set of coral-bells possessed by Gertrude's child,—the gift of its noble god-father. Altogether, she felt uncomfortable and out of conceit with herself beside Gertrude—which is not the frame of mind to develope amiability.

Gertrude made many inquiries about Dunnington and the old place; whether old Joe, the ostler, was living there still; and whether Ralph, the raven, still hopped about the yard; and whether the old grey parrot were alive. Her heart yearned to her old

home, and she would have been glad to hear tidings of the very stones in the street. Mrs Simon Morley, junior, with her sullen self-complacency and severe manners, chose to think that Gertrude was intending to insult her by asking so much about the old inn, when she had considered it beneath her to live there, never taking into her charitable thoughts how bitterly poor Gertrude had expiated, and was likely to expiate, that mistake.

Gertrude then endeavoured to extract some information about several old friends—the Miss Slocums in particular; but she had touched upon a very sore subject. There was a deadly feud between Mrs Simon Morley and the whole tribe of Slocums. The eldest had married the young Squire to whom, as we have said, she was engaged, and the match had been very fortunate; she was now a squire's lady, and took precedence of her at church. The second had married a very interesting young

clergyman, the bishop's chaplain—and had omitted to send her cards and cake. The youngest was not yet married to any one; but, on the strength of her connexions, considered herself extremely superior to Mrs Simon. Consequently there was nothing too severe or ill-natured for Mrs Simon to say of them. There might certainly have been some sins of conceit to lay to their charge, but the chief fault lay in Mrs Simon's cold, touchy, supercilious disposition.

At length dinner-time came—it was a great relief to everybody. It was a dinner fit for a lord mayor's feast,—the table being laid in the hall, as the parlour was too small to accommodate it. Gertrude could not forbear smiling at the contrast between the plenty spread before her, and the cheer to which, of late she had been accustomed. But however substantial and sumptuous a dinner may be, the capacity of human nature to do justice to it is very limited; and it is

only a small fraction of a feast that falls to the lot of each guest !

When dinner was over, the two gentlemen set to work with their pipes, whilst the ladies felt that all occupation was over, and experienced the need of something to do, as they soon became tired of sitting by and looking on. The conversation that passes at a purely family party is generally very dull ; but Gertrude could not help being struck with the difference in Mrs Simon Morley's manners, when she addressed her father,—she fawned upon him and flattered him in the most unreserved manner, till Gertrude felt quite pained for her ; but her manners to Mrs Morley were not of the same elaborate nature, being, in fact, barely respectful and not at all agreeable.

Gertrude grew dreadfully tired before the evening was over ; there was tea, and after that a supper, before it was fairly concluded ; and it was not until past eleven o'clock that

Mr and Mrs Simon Morley stepped into their chaise to return home; and when old Simon wished his daughter-in-law good night, he put a large, handsomely-chased silver tankard, which he had won in a coursing-match, into her hands as a Christmas-box.

If she could have been always amiable and always so well rewarded, she would soon have made a fortune out of her prize temper.

When Simon Morley went to bed that night, he was not tipsy; but he was in a peculiarly perverse and provoking temper. Drinking always developed a spice of maliciousness in him.

"I'll tell you what, wife," said he, "I don't see why Gertrude is not young enough and strong enough to take care of her child herself, without having a fine madam of a nurse to help her. If she cannot it is time she is learned;—anyway, I will keep no such fizzes about here. It is enough



that you and I have to begin to rock the cradle again at our time of life, without being plagued with nurses. You did not see Mrs Simon come trailing with a nurse at her heels; she is a solid-minded, sensible woman, and will help Simon both to get a fortune and to keep one. I wish Ger. would take pattern by her."

"You surely do not mean to compare Simon's wife to our Gertrude?" said Mrs Morley, indignantly; for though she seldom argued with her husband, and never contradicted him when he was the worse for liquor, still this was more than she could bear.

She had been annoyed, too, to see her husband give a handsome cup, one of her silver idols, to "a mean, cold-hearted creature," who, as she said, "only tried to creep up his sleeve for what she could get from him."

It would have been a great comfort for her to have spoken her mind pretty sharply, though she knew it would do no good.

Luckily, Simon Morley gave sonorous evidence that he had fallen fast asleep; so Mrs Morley was saved from committing an imprudence, and, to make amends, she had the comfort of crying to herself in peace.

## CHAPTER III.

NIGHT is *not* the season for meditation: Nature never intended it for anything but SLEEP. The proverb says, that "Night brings counsel," but that is only by adjourning all perplexing points and declining to attend to them till the next day; to lie awake in the hope of solving difficulties is about as sensible as to look for the beauties of Nature with a magic lantern.

During the night every subject looks black, fantastic, and exaggerated, presenting as many different aspects as there are points

in the compass. Nobody need ever expect to get counsel from their pillow except in the shape of sleep.

Poor Mrs Morley lay awake meditating on the last words of her husband; she thought of many different schemes for assisting herself, and bringing him to reason, or else "of making him to repent of it;" but they partook more of "the natural vehemence of the female character" than of any prospect of success. One moment she thought of going away and leaving her husband, taking Gertrude and the baby with her to live where nobody knew them, and take in washing—which, of course, she proposed to do entirely herself, as Gertrude was not to turn her hand to anything. Then again she thought she would speak to her husband, and work upon his feelings to be kind to Gertrude; but she always felt herself constrained to invent some disagreeable speech for him which worried her quite as much

as any actual unkindness of his could have done.

At length morning came, and with the night Mrs Morley's troubles disappeared, or at least they became more manageable.

Simon Morley had a vague sullen recollection of some dispute with his wife the previous night; he did not well recollect the cause of it, still he did not choose to commit himself by any spontaneous act of amiability; indeed, he felt rather inclined to indulge himself with an ill-humour, which, as everybody knows, is a great luxury sometimes. He preserved a dogged silence, and went out to look over his labourers as usual; but he went off in a dignified cloud, without speaking to his wife or saying when he would be in to breakfast.

Hunger, and the force of habit, brought him back within half an hour of the usual time. Gertrude had gone up to the nursery when he returned, and Mrs Morley was

alone in the parlour. She had got ready for him a basin of fine strong green tea, with delicious cream, which Simon always enjoyed when he had been drinking over night, and Mrs Morley was famous for making good tea.

He came round after breakfast into rather a better temper, he spoke once or twice of his own accord, and made no allusion either to Gertrude or the nurse, and Mrs Morley took care not to remind him.

It was market-day at a neighbouring town and he had to attend it, which would keep him from home until night, and this was so much breathing time for his wife.

After she had seen him off, she betook herself to the dairy, where she made a cheese, and then she put away every article that had been brought out during the day, putting off till the last minute the task of breaking her husband's commands to Gertrude; not that she thought it such a great hardship to dispense with a nursery-maid, but she

did not know how to disguise it, so as not to hurt Gertrude's feelings, or make her think she was not a welcome guest.

She found Gertrude sitting alone in the nursery, rocking the baby. "Where's the nurse?" she asked.

"She is packing up her things," said Gertrude. "She told me the day after we came that she should not like to live in such a quiet place, so this morning I told her she might go. I have been thinking that I ought to manage the baby by myself, I have nothing else to do; Mrs Simon brought no nurse with her yesterday, and her baby is younger than mine."

"Well!" said Mrs Morley, inexpressibly relieved to find all her difficulties so naturally solved. "Well! I must say that you are the best, and thoughtfulest, and patientest creature that ever lived; but I don't like the notion of your slaving yourself with that heavy baby."

"Oh, it is not in the least too heavy," said

Gertrude eagerly ; “ besides, I don’t think my father likes to see the nurse, and he did not seem pleased with me, I fancy so at least.”

“ Why, you see,” said Mrs Morley, “ that your father is rather short in his temper, and he does not like nurse-maids, he thinks them all poor sleeveless creatures ; so perhaps it is as well to let yours go ; our girl has very little to do, and she will be delighted to help to take care of the baby.”

“ I wonder how Mrs Simon manages,” said Gertrude, “ for she must have her hands full with the house.”

“ Oh, she takes care of herself, and will never be killed by any work *she* will do, I warrant. As to not bringing a nurse yesterday, it was all her falseness, to curry favour with your father ; I have no patience with her—a fawning, deceitful thing. And to think of your father being so taken in by her as to give her that silver coursing-cup ; I would



not have cared for its going, if she had been a different sort of person."

Women cannot bear to see presents made to other women before their face, even though it may not be an object they personally covet. There is a natural jealousy in the sex, even amongst the best and most generous of them, and it must be owned that in this instance it was a very aggravating piece of generosity of which Simon Morley had been guilty.

The next day the nurse returned to London. She had a home to go to, and Mrs Morley made her a present over and above her wages, for her kindness to Gertrude, with whom she had lived since the birth of the child.

Although delivered from this cause of offence, Simon Morley and his daughter did not get on much better together; he had, in fact, taken a prejudice against her. He might, in time, have forgiven her running away (though a father offended is more difficult to

win back than a mother), and he might have grown accustomed to her superior refinement of manners, if it had been atoned for by any substantial basis of prosperity and station; but, unhappily, Gertrude had made the worst of all possible matches; she had not only married a man without a shilling, but she had come back with her child to be a burden to him, and there was a very indefinite prospect that she would ever be anything else. He had a mortal antipathy to poor people; he felt uncomfortable when they were near him, possibly from an ill-defined idea that he ought to assist them, which, however, he never did. He paid his poor rates with an emphatic protest against their injustice, and he never gave away a farthing in charity. So that when his own daughter brought poverty into the bosom of his family, he felt that he had a right to be indignant, and he hated the sight both of her and the child. If he had been a lawgiver it is to be feared that he would have exposed all the babies who were

likely to be chargeable to the parish. His rooted aversion to poverty, as something contrary to nature, had its rise in a better feeling ; his own shrewd industry and horror of becoming dependent upon others had, by the lapse of years, all devoted to money-getting, become hardened and withered into his present sordid and unamiable spirit.

Gertrude kept herself as much as possible out of her father's way, and confined herself, with the baby, to the nursery ; still they were obliged to be together sometimes, and on those occasions he either did not speak to her at all, or else he would ask her how it happened that, with six hundred a-year and no incumbrances, she and her husband had not kept their chins above water ? inquiring with a false jocularity, " how much she thought they could do it for ? " There was some justice in his remarks, but he took a cruel advantage of having both all the right, and all the power, on his own side ; he showed no mercy to Gertrude, and never spared her

a single remark or sarcasm that occurred to him.

Poor Gertrude suffered cruelly ; her spirits drooped, as well they might, under this constant worry. She would willingly have delivered herself from it, and gone to live in a garret, and worked for herself, but it was not the least of her troubles that she was powerless to do anything ; her child took up all her time. She *must* remain where she was, or starve ; her father's hospitality, however grudgingly bestowed, was the only person's she had the shadow of a right to claim.

Gertrude found, by bitter experience, that when people have once thrown themselves out of the current, they cannot return to it at will. She had left her father's roof and thrown heedlessly away her lawful right to its shelter and protection ; she had come back, as he said, to be a burden ; she had nothing to do there, her place was with her husband, and she was an incumbrance to him also. She had suffered ignominy and reproaches from her husband's

relations on whom she had been intruded ; but for those she had cared little—she had a right to be with her husband ; but here, in her father's house, she filled no place, she was not wanted, she could do nothing to requite the obligation she received, and no one knows how bitter that is until they have tried it.

Poor girl ! she had bitterly suffered for her first false step ; all her progress since had been like an attempt to wind a skein of silk by the wrong end. Mrs Morley did her best to shield her daughter from annoyance, to avert all occasions of collision with her husband. But the strain that was needed to do this was very painful, and the embarrassment and restraint that had been introduced into their domestic intercourse made home unpleasant to all parties.

This state of things was constantly liable to be aggravated by accidental circumstances. One day the servant, who had been rebuked for flirting with one of the plough-boys, chose to revenge herself by grumbling before her

master, because Mrs Donnelly always "would want the new milk for baby," when she had set it aside for cream; and muttering, that if she had known there was "a baby in the family she would never have agreed to come, for that she did not like children, and had not been engaged to help to nurse them."

Another time it chanced that dinner was a little behind, and the excuse was that she had been "nursing baby."

These seem trifling incidents, but they were like the grains of sand that go to pile up a mountain. How much longer things could have gone on as they were is doubtful, but matters were brought to a crisis by a letter received by Gertrude from her husband, when she had been at the cottage about two months.

It was dated from an obscure village near Boulogne. In it he drew a most gloomy picture of his position, and seemed in a very desponding way; in fact, the fine spirits of Mr Augustus were completely damped. Lord

Southend had gone on to Italy, so he had no hopes from that quarter until his return. Gertrude might have borne all this,—feeling a good deal of sympathy certainly, but still without being made much more miserable than she already was,—but Mr Augustus concluded by desiring that she would beg or borrow for him sufficient money to enable him to come back to England, and expressing his intention to come and see “whether her friends would keep him snug from his creditors, until he should have made some arrangement with them.” He then drew a vivid picture of the miserably unhappy condition to which he was reduced;—“exiled in a small village, without a Christian soul to speak to, and nothing to pass on the time, except thinking of his dearest Gertrude and his confounded debts!”

Gertrude, who had hoped that things were mending with her husband, was thrown into great shame and trouble by the receipt of this letter. To be a burden herself upon her father was bad enough, but to bring her husband

upon him too,—to beg money from him,—was something far worse than she had ever contemplated.

Within the last two months she had learned practically what it was to be dependent, and she felt bitterly humiliated that Augustus should seem so indifferent about it. Her mother found her crying, with the letter in her lap.

“ Dear me, it is a bad job,” said she, after she had read it. “ I don’t know how we must break it to your father ; he is as queer tempered as he can be ; all owing,” added she hastily, “ to that stupid Bill Stringer laming the new cart-horse, when he took it to be shod last week ; and Betsy has just told me that one of the cows is ill, and would not give her milk this morning ; so when he comes home and hears it, there will be no containing him in the house. If men did but know how their violent ways break poor women’s hearts, they would be more considerate.”

“ I can never tell him about Augustus,” said Gertrude, “ and I never will. If I could



only get up to London, Lady Southend has promised to give me work, and I might earn enough to keep us all."

" Bless thee, child ! what nonsense thou dost talk. I declare it quite vexes me to hear you. What couldst thou do, I should like to know, with that blessed baby cutting its teeth, and as fractious, the little darling, as it can be, keeping you on the stretch night and day to attend to it? Gaining a living takes you all day long hard work, and sometimes part of the night too ; and besides, I have no opinion of women working for their husbands ; it is taking things the wrong way about, and if your husband is a right-minded man he will not desire it, but work himself to the bone before you should think of it. Leave me to manage your father, I know his humours better than you do, and it stands to reason he can do no good by stopping in those foreign parts ; he had best come back, and put his shoulder to the wheel here."

Gertrude sighed ; she had an instinct that

her husband had very little notion of putting his own shoulder to it.

Poor Mrs Morley did not too well know how she was to make her husband "hear reason," as she called it; but she did not tell Gertrude so. That night brought Simon Morley home in a better temper than had graced him for a long time, owing to a good bargain he had made; the horse too was better, so that Mrs Morley considered she should never have a more favourable opportunity.

According to Mrs Ellis, there is a certain diplomacy by which all wives may rule their husbands, and guide them in the way they are desired to go. It is a great pity that Mrs Morley lived before that lady's valuable works were written, otherwise she might have been more successful than she was. Simon Morley, so soon as he understood that his son-in-law had written to beg assistance, desired to see the letter, which Mrs Morley was obliged to give him, though she would

have preferred telling his story her own way. Simon Morley put on his spectacles and deliberately read every word of the letter, and then he said—

“ This is the second letter of that young chap’s writing that I have seen, and it just confirms the first notion I formed of him ; he is a wastrel—an idle, good-for-nothing, whiffing fellow. He is better there than here, but he never will do a pennyworth of good anywhere ; and I am not going to put my money into a sack with holes, and I am not going to have him standing about here. Gertrude is welcome to stop here, and the baby too, as long as she pleases, but I’ll have nought to do with her husband, and you had best not mention his name to me again, or you and Gertrude may pack out of the house together. A young jackanapes, to talk in that free and easy way of being ‘ kept snug from his creditors ;’ may be, I would give [them a hint where to look for him, if he put his nose in here.”

After uttering this speech with much emphasis, Simon Morley filled his pipe, and sat majestically enveloped in the clouds that rose from it. His wife had not even the comfort of thinking that he was in a passion, and had said more than he meant, for he was in a provokingly good humour all the rest of the evening. The fact is, he had long expected the appeal in question, and the idea of the vain, idle, thriftless husband in the back-ground, ready to come down and quarter himself on his "wife's vulgar relations," had marred the cordiality of his welcome to Gertrude; he had been lying in wait for an opportunity to express his determination, and now that he had spoken his mind, he felt quite relieved and happy, and as well pleased with himself as if his conscience had applauded him for a good deed. It must be owned that there was some sense in what he had said.

## CHAPTER IV.

POOR Mrs Morley retired quite crest-fallen. She was mortified on account of Gertrude, but she was also specially provoked at the grim triumphant look of her husband, who seemed quite to enjoy her discomfiture; but she was not at the end of her resources, and fortune befriended her.

Her son chanced to ride over the next day to speak to his father about some land he thought of buying, and into his ears she poured out her perplexities. We have seen that he met his sister with more kindness and gentle-

ness than of old. Since he had been married he had changed his views on several subjects, and his conscience smote him for not having been very kind to his sister ; possibly the matrimonial discipline of his wife's temper had developed his brotherly affection. At any rate he said :

“ Well, mother, don't fret about it, and say no more to my father, he is like a rock when he has once taken a thing into his head. Let Ger. and her husband come to us for a while—as long as they like—and the baby can be in our little lad's nursery ; it is quite big enough, and they will play together nicely. I dare say amongst us we can raise enough to fetch Donnelly over,—it is of no use his stopping there,—and who knows what may turn up? His friends exerted themselves for him once before, and may do again if he can only hold on for a while. We must just help him to get up his head a bit,—only I am afraid Ger. won't make herself happy along with us.”

“ No fear of that, my lad ; she is as humble

and as meek as an angel; it makes me fairly cry sometimes to see her pride so come down,—so grateful she is for the least thing, and so afraid of giving trouble. But, I say, your wife has an overbearing way with her sometimes; don't let her put upon Gertrude, nor trample upon her."

"I would like to see her attempt it," replied the younger Simon, imperiously. "My wife knows that my will is law, and she dare not set up herself against what I choose,—and I choose that she shall treat Gertrude as my sister."

"Ah, well," said Mrs Morley, "don't go and say that to her. You had best leave Gertrude to make her own way, for she is so sweet-tempered and so pleasant-spoken, nobody can resist her. No doubt she will know how to please Mrs Simon."

But the idea of "her Gertrude" having to study the whims and caprices of Mrs Simon, was almost too much for Mrs Morley's patience, and she turned away to hide the tears that nearly choked her. Her son, whom the absence

of his wife rendered bold, did not perceive her agitation, but added in an off-hand manner: "Give my love to Ger. and tell her we shall expect her. Mrs Simon is no great hand at writing out anything but the bills, so she must excuse a polite invitation, and take the will for the deed—and I will send a chaise over for her some day next week."

"But you will see your sister, and tell her yourself?" said Mrs Morley.

"No, no, you can explain things better than I can; it would look as if I were casting up my promises to make her thank me. I am fond of Ger. but I don't know how to talk to her."

When Simon Morley junior returned home he found that the plan, which had looked so easy and delightful when he was at the cottage, grew much more difficult of execution. His wife was in a very bad humour, and the whole house was in a bustle; he therefore made an excuse to himself to delay the communication "till a more convenient season," but in pro-



portion as he delayed, his courage ebbed. He said to himself that he "was not afraid," that he was "master in his own house," and sundry other truisms, which, however, he found untenable, and sat at night in the bar beating his brains for the best method of breaking the matter to his wife. At length he made a bold plunge, at precisely the *wrong* moment. Mrs Simon was settling her book, and endeavouring to balance a refractory column which showed a deficiency of sevenpence halfpenny. She was in the midst of her third attempt at addition when the thread of her attention was snapped by her husband's saying in an authoritative voice, to disguise his trepidation,—

"I have invited my sister Gertrude and her husband to come and stop with us."

Mrs Simon went on with her addition, and did not appear to hear him; her husband continued in a louder key,—

"I tell you that I have invited my sister and her husband to come and stop with us. What do you mean by your in-

solence in sitting there like a post, and never answering when I speak to you? I tell you they shall come here, and stay as long as I please; you may look, but I am not to be put down. I desire you to give orders to send a chaise on Saturday for Mrs Donnelly."

Mrs Simon Morley looked at her husband with great contempt, and then said with provoking calmness, but with the supremest disdain,—

"Of course, Mr Simon Morley, it shall be as you please; nobody ever doubted your right to invite anybody you choose,—send a chaise for your sister, by all means; perhaps it will please you to make her the mistress of this house instead of me—pray do. Of course, it will be quite right; I slave myself for you, and save for you, and stint myself of everything, in order that you may come home and fly out upon me, as if I were the dirt under your feet. I stay at home, and wear my poor soul out of my body, to keep things going, whilst you go riding

about to fairs and markets, and guzzling with everybody who will drink with you.— I am a miserable woman, that I am.”

This tirade, of course, ended in a violent gush of tears. Her husband sat feeling half angry and half foolish; he had not expected such a storm, and he did not know how to retreat with dignity. He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and said naïvely,—

“I wish you would not talk so much! I am fairly mothered with so many words; do make an end and come to bed.”

But Mrs Simon Morley would not “make an end;” long and bitterly she scolded on, for though in general silent, when once launched in a grievance, she sustained it with more than ordinary female vehemence, and took care to embrace a wide range of complaint. A stranger would have thought that a separation to all eternity must have ensued, but it was only a matrimonial storm; neither party meant the other any particular ill beyond the annoyance of the moment,

and it calmed down, leaving, as was generally the case, Mrs Simon rather more confirmed in her influence, and her husband rather more afraid of provoking her than before.

The result was, that the incipient dislike which Mrs Simon felt to Gertrude was confirmed into a positive detestation. She did not think it prudent to refuse to receive Gertrude altogether, but she had succeeded in receiving her sister-in-law upon the footing it best pleased her, and leaving herself free to wreak any small feminine spite she chose; whilst her husband, content with having carried his point, was afraid to interfere further,—and she took care to give him no pretext. He was delighted to see her despatch a chaise to the cottage on the appointed day, and as if she were bent on showing how amiable she could be, she went so far as to write a note to Gertrude, with a moderately cordial invitation from herself.

Gertrude, though grateful to her brother, did not at all like the idea of trying the

hospitality of her sister-in-law for an unlimited period ; but she was come to that unhappy pass when she was obliged to feel grateful for "small mercies" of the most unpalatable kind. She was *dependent* upon her friends, and obliged to receive house and shelter upon any terms. Simon Morley, when told of his son's offer, had declared "that she could not do better than go ;" after this there was no appeal, and Mrs Morley, with a sorrowful heart, prepared to let her depart. She would herself have accompanied her, but Simon Morley was attacked by a fit of the gout, which not only detained her, but made him so irritable that she was almost thankful to get her daughter out of the house.

## CHAPTER V.

THE chaise drove the back way into the yard of the Mettingham Arms, and so avoided going through the town. Everything brought back to her remembrance the day when she came home from school; there was a curious coincidence even in the accidental circumstances. A travelling-carriage was changing horses, and a large party were stopping to dine; the house was in the bustle she so well remembered. Mrs Simon Morley was busy receiving her guests, and there was no one to welcome her except old Joe, the

lame ostler ; she could almost have embraced him, he was the only one who remained of the old set of servants.

Gertrude bitterly felt the difference between *then* and now. She stood with the baby in her arms waiting for some one to show her where to go, and feeling more miserable than she had ever yet been,—choked, and suffocated, and wretched,—far too miserable to cry.

In a few moments Mrs Simon Morley came up to her, and told her, with a dash of patronage in her manner, that she was glad to see her, and begged she would consider herself at home. Her brother came as they were speaking, booted and spurred, and followed by his dogs,—he had been out coursing, and he had not expected her so soon. He was very pleased to see her, and received her as cordially as he durst for fear of vexing his wife.

“Well, wife, where are you going to put Ger.? Somebody had better carry these things

up-stairs. Have you put her into the room next to ours?"

"I have prepared Mrs Donnelly's room," said Mrs Simon, with an air of putting down all questions; "and if she will follow me I will show her to it myself."

Instead of turning down the passage leading to Gertrude's old room, which had, indeed, been once more transformed into a nursery, they mounted a steep flight of stairs that led to the "servants' story." Mrs Simon opened the door of a light roomy attic, with sloping roof and full of beams and rafters, but brilliantly white and clean; two casements stuck into small gables commanded a view of the church, and the country lying beyond. It was furnished sufficiently well for an attic, but without any attempt at extra comfort. There was nothing to complain of in it, and it was decidedly more comfortable than her bed-room at Mrs Donnelly's; still it marked painfully the difference between her former and her present position in that house,—



between the home she had recklessly cast off and the home to which she was returning, to eat the bread of charity.

"I have put you here," said Mrs Simon, "in order that you might feel quite settled; the house is often so full that in any other room I might have been obliged to disturb you. Simon and I are sometimes obliged to give up our room; it is quite wonderful how travelling has increased of late years. I hope you will be comfortable,—pray ask for all you want. There is a nursery down stairs where you can sit with the baby; I dare say you——"

A voice loudly calling at the bottom of the stairs obliged her to leave her speech unfinished, but she had nearly got to the end of all she had to say. Gertrude looked round the room when she was alone; there was no bell, and no fire lighted. It was too cold to indulge long in meditation, and she went down stairs in search of the nursery; glad, at least, to be sure of a comfortable refuge for the baby.

Gertrude's brother had been as good as his word. He had received some money for the sale of some wheat, and, without his wife's knowledge, he had written to his brother-in-law and sent him the wherewithal to pay his journey; Mrs Simon Morley received the remainder of the money, without in the least suspecting what her husband had done with the rest. He had planned to surprise his sister, and had fixed her arrival as near as he could guess for the day when her husband would reach Dunnington. He was rewarded for his pains; for that very evening, as they were sitting down to supper in the little lantern-like bar-parlour, Mr Augustus Donnelly, somewhat soiled and unshaved, but perfectly at his ease, and on the best possible terms with himself, walked into the room.

## CHAPTER VI.

Mrs Simon Morley was a very virtuous woman indeed, but she was not insensible to the soothing voice of flattery, especially when distilled from the lips of a good-looking young man. When Mr Augustus Donnelly entered in the unexpected manner mentioned in the last chapter, to the great surprise of everybody, except that of Simon Morley, Mrs Simon was disposed to look extremely displeased and disagreeable; but Mr Augustus was not an Irishman for nothing,—he had lived by his wits the greater part of his life, and knew the importance of mollifying the mistress of

any house where he proposed to take up his quarters. He was an adept in the strategy of that peculiar species of courtship denominated "cupboard-love," and he piqued himself upon his skill to draw the teeth, and pare the claws, of the most determined shrew in Christendom. A glance at the face of Mrs Simon revealed to him the genus of woman he had to deal with, as a short postscript in his brother-in-law's letter had enlightened him upon the domestic politics of the Mettringham Arms.

The postscript was :—"Do not tell any one that I sent you this money ; I have particular reasons for not wishing my wife to know."

"*Les sages entendent à demi mot,*"—and Mr Augustus proved himself deserving of the epithet. Before he had been five minutes in the room, Mrs Simon Morley was under his charm.

After saluting Gertrude, and shaking hands with his brother-in-law, he seated himself by Mrs Simon, and began to pay her a thousand little attentions, such as the good

woman had never received in her life, not even from her husband when he courted her, nor from all the young men whom she had driven to the verge of distraction, by refusing "to keep company with them." Mr Augustus contrived to make her feel that he was decidedly struck with her appearance, and impressed by the peculiar fascination of her manners. This was not conveyed in a way calculated to alarm her sensitive modesty, but was combined with a respectful deference to her, as a most superior woman. It was wonderful how, in so short a space of time, he had become enlightened upon her choice qualities.

He took his seat by her at table, as if he had lived in the house all his life; and whilst he relieved her from the task of carving the roast ducks, he made some jokes just suited to her capacity, and which made her laugh heartily; but he did not venture to praise anything at table, lest she should think everything only too good for him, but he improvised some compliments, which he declared Lord South-

end and the Marquis of Dulcamnara had paid to the Mettingham Arms one day, at a white-bait dinner, declaring in the presence of the head waiter, "that there was no inn like it for comfort, either in or out of London;" and he took care to clinch the compliment by dating it quite recently, and within the period of her administration.

Her husband was enchanted to see his wife in so genial a humour, and thought he should have in his brother-in-law an ally in all his domestic difficulties.

Gertrude did not admire this display of flattery and devotion to Mrs Simon. She thought it was only encouraging her self-complacency and general disagreeableness, and could not help thinking how much better women are rewarded for their exacting ill-humours, than when they make a practice of trying to be forbearing and habitually amiable. She interrupted the current of compliments, by saying,—

"You have never told us, dear Augustus,

how you managed to find your way here so opportunely ; I fancied you were still in France."

Simon Morley junior felt rather uneasy at this question ; he underrated the tact of Mr Augustus.

"Your worthy brother generously told me that his house was open to me whenever I came to England, but for the means of coming here, I am indebted to the unexpected generosity of a friend ; and do you find it unnatural that I should use my first funds to rejoin you ?"

Wives are sometimes hard to be persuaded, even by sweet speeches, and Gertrude would much have preferred that her husband should have remained absent, rather than come to join her as a hanger-on upon her brother. She fancied, too, there was a tone of servility, a vulgar obsequiousness, which she had never observed in him before.

Mr Augustus was, in truth, much the same as usual ; he had the gift of suiting

himself to his company, and as he was never over-burdened with delicate perceptions, he could make himself comfortable everywhere. But the curse of being dependent changes the very nature of virtues, and makes what, under other circumstances, would have been courteous forbearance, seem nothing but self-interested endurance; it is a reversed alchemy, for it transforms golden qualities into brazen counterfeits.

Dependence in modern times is what slavery was of old, and it is equally true of both, that it takes all manliness and quality of character out of whoever voluntarily submits to it.

When the party separated for the night, Gertrude retired with the determination of straining every nerve to find employment that should enable her to do something towards supporting herself and the child; whilst Mr Augustus thought that, as he had fallen into comfortable quarters, he would improve the friendly disposition of



his hosts, and enjoy them as long as possible. As to the obligation, he considered that he was a *gentleman*, and, as such, they might feel honoured by entertaining him. He had no conception of gratitude towards persons in their class.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE next day being Sunday, Gertrude went to church with her husband. Mrs Simon Morley was too busy ever to go to church, except in the afternoon, and Simon himself had no great taste for going at all; still he went sometimes, and slept peacefully through the service. He was what used to be called a "good Church and King man," and would have knocked anyone down who was either an infidel or a jacobin, though his own loyalty was mainly confined to getting very particularly drunk upon the

King's birthday, and his Christianity, besides the occasional going to church above mentioned, was shown by giving the boys of the town five shillings, for a Guy Fawkes, every fifth of November.

The church looked as Gertrude had always remembered it, except that the square family-pew, lined with green baize, was rather more moth-eaten; but the prayer-books and hymn-books were those that she had used when she first went to church. The one she took up had her name written in it, in her father's handwriting,—a birthday gift, when she had completed her sixth year.

The asthmatic organ was uttering the old dismal psalm tunes which had taxed the ears and the patience of the congregation for a century past.

Gertrude felt that all the congregation was curiously regarding her; she did not look round, but kept her veil down, and concealed herself as much as possible behind one of the stone pillars. Everything seemed

the same as it had been the last Sunday she was there ; by a curious coincidence, the clergyman had come round, in the clerical cycle of his sermons, to one she had last heard him preach, and she felt as if the change in her own fortunes were mocked by this unchanged continuance of all that surrounded her.

But when service was over, and the congregation dismissed, and Gertrude, who had loitered till the last, was following the rest, she was stopped at the church-door by several persons who had been waiting for her. Old Mr and Mrs Slocum were the first who greeted her. Mr Slocum had not recovered the severe illness he had had some months before ; it had pulled him down sadly ; but Mrs Slocum looked just the same, rather younger if anything.

“ My dear Gertrude, welcome back amongst us,” said the old lady, in a quavering voice. “ I declare this is quite a surprise.

When did you come? Is your mother here?"

But before Gertrude could reply, her hand was snatched and heartily shaken by a tall full-blown young woman, in a magnificent hat and feathers, and a brilliant scarlet mantle, lined with white satin.

"Why, Gertrude, you have forgotten me, I declare!" cried she in a loud, but cheery voice. "I am Martha Slocum that was,—now Mrs Greenway; and this is my husband," continued she, jerking forwards a florid, good-tempered looking man, in yellow buckskins and top boots, on whose arm she was leaning. "I said it must be you, though I could not see your face, and you were hidden by the pillar, and nobody would believe me. But, my gracious! how ill you look,—quite pale and thin; not like me. Sam says I am growing so fat, that he shall be indicted for bigamy, for having twice as much of a wife as he married;" and she

laughed in her husband's face, with enviable admiration of his wit.

Gertrude answered as best she could, and introduced Mr Augustus to them, who acquitted himself extremely well; and Mrs Greenway, looking at him with curiosity, admitted to herself that any woman might be excused for running away with him.

Poor Gertrude enjoyed a small triumph, in the midst of her sorrows, to see that her husband looked, beside Mr Slocum and Mr Greenway, as if he belonged to another race of men, so infinitely superior he appeared; and she was proud of seeing that they all acknowledged it.

It was for this shadowy gratification that she had thrown away the inheritance of her life before she had well entered upon it.

"Well, I am sure we shall be delighted to see you both at Lane End," said Mrs Greenway. "Mrs Simon and I have never visited; but that is no reason why you and I should not be friends again as we used

to be. Will you come to-morrow and take a friendly dinner with us, and have a talk about old times?"

Gertrude objected, that she could not leave the baby.

"Oh, the little darling! I will come and fetch you in the phaeton, and you can bring it with you, and it can make friends with our twins, so that is settled. I wonder," continued she, addressing her husband, "where that Joe can be with the phaeton all this time; he ought to have been waiting for us."

As she spoke, a large roomy vehicle, of no strict denomination, was driven up by a boy in pepper-and-salt livery and a silver band round his hat. Into this Mrs Greenway was handed by her husband, who took the reins and seated himself by her side, whilst the servant mounted behind.

"Remember, I shall come for you to-morrow, at eleven o'clock," cried the lady, in a voice that might have been heard to

the other end of the town, and kissing her hand to the old people, the worthy and prosperous pair drove off at a brisk pace.

"There goes a happy woman, if ever there was one!" said Mr Slocum, looking after the phaeton with glistening eyes—"she has one of the best of husbands, and everything this world can give; and she enjoys it, she is happy, and makes others happy too. Bless you, her husband worships the very ground she treads on! You should see her follow the hounds along with him—it is a sight; he has had a scarlet habit made for her, and she looks grand in it!"

"If she were in London, in the park, she would be looked at," said Mr Augustus, when there was a pause; "she is a monstrous fine woman, and her husband seems a very nice young fellow; they are a fine couple."

"Aye, that they are, and they are respected by high and low. They have a very nice place of their own; land that has been in



the family for generations ; and whenever you go you will be sure of a hearty welcome."

Sunday was always the old man's grand gala day—every Sunday he had the proud satisfaction of walking out of church with his daughter before all the congregation, and seeing her drive off in "her own carriage;" and he enjoyed this far more than any dignity that could have happened to himself.

## CHAPTER VIII.

MRS GREENWAY drove up in her phaeton the next day to fetch Gertrude, according to promise; she entered the bar with a good-tempered jovial consciousness that she was a very fine woman indeed, and that her beaver hat and feathers became her immensely.

Mrs Simon was sitting at her little table writing out a ticket for a post-boy who was in waiting.

The vicar sat upon the little hard horse-hair sofa beneath the window, reading the

London paper—his custom always every morning, and Mrs Simon liked to have it so, as she thought it gave him the appearance of being a friend of the family; occasionally the vicar's wife and daughter called upon her, and this always gratified her, for they were the sun and stars of her social system.

After shaking hands with Mrs Simon, who received her very stiffly, and tried to look as though she did not consider her visit any concern of hers, Mrs Greenway turned to the vicar, and inquired after his family in a friendly, familiar manner, that spoke of intimacy.

She turned again to Mrs Simon and said,—

“I came to invite you to come to us this evening; we are expecting a few friends in a sociable way to tea and supper, and Sam bid me say he should see Mr Simon at market, and would ask him to come. It is so seldom you give yourself a holiday that I hope you will be sociable and come.”

Mrs Simon replied stiffly, that she was too busy to visit—and that, if her husband went out, there was so much the more reason why she must stay at home.

Mrs Greenway was rather glad to hear it, but hesitated, as she thought it right to declare she would take no refusal.

Gertrude entered in her bonnet and shawl, with the baby in her arms—looking very pretty and lady-like.

Mrs Greenway rushed up and embraced her, with a boisterous good-will that nearly upset Mrs Simon's little table, and whisked down her account-book and the bill she had just written out.

"I hope I have not kept you long waiting," said Gertrude.

"Oh, no; I am only just come—and so that is your baby! what a real little darling! I have twins to show you when we go home! Is it not fun to think we should both of us have babies? I declare it seems only yesterday since Matilda, Emma, and I

came over to see you, the day you left school for good. Your mother sat just where Mrs Simon does; the place is not the least changed—only you and I. But I am sure we are filling the bar, and taking up Mrs Simon's time; she must wish us out of her road. As Sam says, 'One word hinders two blows.' Good morning, Mrs Simon, and recollect I shall not excuse you—I shall quite expect you."

There was a certain dash of patronage in Mrs Greenway's manner. Mrs Simon drew herself up, and said, freezingly,

"That she had no time for dressing and visiting, and that Mrs Greenway could do quite well without her"—which was quite true, but Mrs Greenway nevertheless persisted :

"I am sure you are always nicely dressed. We are plain homely people—you can come just as you are. We like our friends to take us as they find us—without ceremony."

Mrs Simon looked as though she was absorbed in adding up her cash-book, and

made no answer. The vicar gallantly rose to escort them to the phaeton, and Mrs Simon heard him asked to come in the evening with his wife and daughter, for a friendly rubber, whilst the young people might enjoy a round game.

The phaeton clattered out of the yard, and Mrs Simon, with her temper sharper than ordinary, was left to pursue her domestic cares in peace. She pounced first upon a delinquent housemaid, and gave her summary warning for having neglected to take up the carpet in No. 8 bed-room ; she next gave orders that any visitors coming to call for Mrs Donnelly should be shown up-stairs into the nursery. Her husband and Mr Augustus came in to dinner before the effervescence of her soul had subsided to the level of its banks.

"I met Greenway's phaeton," said Simon, "with Ger. and the baby, and Mrs Greenway, inside; she said she had been to call on you,

and she asked me and Donnelly to drop in to supper, and to see Ger. home."

"Very well, Mr Simon Morley, you can go if you choose ; but what with visitors in a morning, and goings out at night, don't blame *me* if the house comes to ruin. *I* stop at home and deny myself every amusement ; I don't even go to church, and I know the vicar thinks me worse than a heathen—just to see myself made of no account, and to be treated like dirt by everybody who comes to the house. I have thought too little of myself, and slaved myself to death to take care of your money, and this is all the thanks I get ! If I had been a wasteful extravagant woman, and flaunted about in a hat and feathers, you would have been in the Gazette, but you would have thought more of me ; but if I were to lie down and die at your feet, you would not even thank me !"

Dinner being by this time on the table, Mrs Simon took her place with an indignant

bounce, and began to carve a large round of beef with the air of one to whom all the virtue left in the world had fled for refuge, whilst she felt herself scarcely able to protect it. Her husband did not exactly understand what all this talk was about ; but as he was pretty well accustomed to these tirades, he shook his ears, made no reply, and ate his dinner like a domestic philosopher.

Mr Augustus followed his example for a while, but towards the end of dinner he remarked carelessly to his brother-in-law that Mrs Greenway was a full-blown, high-coloured young woman—that her voice was coarse, her pronunciation vulgar ; that she appeared to him to be quite common-place in her ideas, and to have very little conversation—that her scarlet mantle made her look for all the world like a farmer's wife bringing her eggs and butter to market. He said that in a year or two her figure would have no more shape than a feather-bed, and appealed to Mrs Simon as to the strong personal likeness



betwixt old Mrs Slocum and her daughter. These observations were all made quite pleasantly, and with the manner of a man accustomed to pass his opinion, and to have it listened to. He spoke in a lofty man-of-fashion tone that was quite imposing.

Mr Simon Morley had lighted his pipe meanwhile, and sat puffing forth volumes of smoke, without thinking it necessary to make any reply. Mrs Simon recovered her temper and smoothed her ruffled plumes wonderfully. She held a light for Mr Augustus, and mixed him a glass of gin-and-water with her own fair hands; and, taking up her sewing, she began to ask him questions about the parks, the theatres, high society and life in London generally, to all which Mr Augustus answered as he thought best, and gave her a description of what the Queen and all the Princesses wore at the last Drawing-room, and told her many interesting anecdotes of members of the aristocracy, "personal friends of his own," as he informed

her. Mrs Simon was called out, and whilst she was gone her husband remarked—

“That his wife was as queer as Dick’s hatband; there was no knowing what would vex her or what would please her; but, for all that, she was generally right in her notions, and was a clever woman.” To which Mr Augustus warmly assented.

It is remarkable that, when men have a singularly bad-tempered wife, they console themselves with the belief that is a sign she is “a superior woman.”

Meanwhile Gertrude and Mrs Greenway arrived without accident at “Lane End,” as Mrs Greenway’s house was called. It was a large rambling place, built of deep red brick—it was in its pretensions something between a farm-house and a gentleman’s mansion. A white five-barred gate admitted the phaeton into a large field, through which there was a broad gravel drive—it was not an avenue, although a luxuriant hedge-row, planted at intervals with stately trees, gave

it partially the appearance of one; that field led by another with a white gate like the former; after which they entered another field, in which at the head of a gentle rise the house was situated. A large garden, an orchard, and various farm-buildings lay in the rear.

“ We will drive round to the back yard, if you don’t mind, Gertrude; it is so much handier for the horse, and Sam does not like to see the gravel cut up with wheels; it is the one thing he is particular about. I tell him he is like an old maid about it.”

They drove into a large stable-yard, paved with stones. An immense mastiff came out of his kennel to the utmost stretch of his chain, and barked furiously at their advent, and several dogs of various breeds and sizes joined the chorus. A farm-servant came running to take the horse; Mrs Greenway alighted without any help, and took the baby from Gertrude. They entered the house through a glass door, and went up a wide

tilled passage, past the kitchen, a large comfortable place, with flitches of bacon, hams, and dried tongues hanging from the ceiling. Two buxom servant women in print dresses, with tight short sleeves, were busily engaged at the dresser beneath the window—an air of well-to-do plenty reigned in every direction.

Mrs Greenway took Gertrude at once to the nursery, where with great pride she showed her '*twins*,' both fast asleep in the same cradle—little, fat, rosy things, hopelessly undistinguishable from each other. Gertrude duly admired them; and then her own baby was taken possession of by the good-tempered-looking nurse, to be fed and put to sleep, whilst its mother was dragged off to see the remaining household gods of Mrs Greenway's 'hearth and home.' First, they went to Mrs Greenway's bed-room, there to take off their things, and to take the opportunity of looking at the grand wardrobe, and all Mrs Greenway's best dresses, and last new

bonnet; her wedding dress was exhibited—stone-coloured satin, with elaborate trimmings of blue gimp.

“Sam declares that this dress shall never be worn out or altered, for it brought him the happiest day of his life. Do you know we have never had a wrong word together since we were married? I am sure I think he grows better every day. Don’t you call him very handsome?”

Gertrude said, she thought Mr Greenway very good-looking; it was no great stretch of candour.

“Here is his wedding waistcoat, which I say shall keep my gown company; it is many a day since he could make it meet round him. But now come and see the parlours.”

The dining-room was a large, low room, with a rafted ceiling and bow window; a dark heavy mahogany dining-table with many legs stood in the centre of the room; a Turkey carpet, with the pattern somewhat worn out, covered the floor; a large pointer

was basking before the fire, whilst a tortoiseshell cat dozed and purred in one of the large easy chairs which stood on each side of the hearth-rug. Portraits of Mr and Mrs Greenway hung against the wall.

Mr Greenway was reading a letter, with his name and address legibly written on the back. Mrs Greenway, seated under a tree, in a hat and feathers, was reading a book bound in red, and lettered in gold,—“For-dyce’s Sermons to Young Women.”

But the “best parlour” was the pride of her heart; it was on the other side of the tile-paved hall—a low bow-windowed room with a rafted ceiling, like its companion.

It had been new furnished on the occasion of their marriage, and there was a certain air of modern finery about it. The curtains were bright blue, trimmed with red and yellow ball fringe; a pair of pole-screens stood at either end of the chimney-piece—one represented a young lady in a

tight muslin frock and blue sash, playing the tambourine, and the other the same young lady feeding a pet lamb. The hearth-rug was the combined work of the three Miss Slocums—a tiger's head surrounded by sprigs of roses. The carpet was covered with red, blue, and yellow flowers, as like nature as could be expected, when every flower was blazoned in its wrong colours. A scrap-screen—a piano—a stuffed fox—a small bookcase with glass doors—a hard grecian-shaped couch, covered with blue moreen, and trimmed with yellow cord—whilst the chairs, cushions, and footstools were to match.

Mrs Greenway was quite satisfied that her "best parlour" was equal, if not superior, to any other in England—but she chose to be modest, and said,—

"I suppose in London, among the quality there, this room would be thought quite shabby?—would it not now?"

Gertrude tried to conciliate the truth with the household pride of her companion.

"Do people sit every day in their best parlours?" asked Mrs Greenway again.

"Mrs Donnelly only used ours on the days when she received visitors."

"Do tell me about your house—what was it like? and how was your best parlour furnished?" said Mrs Greenway eagerly.

Gertrude began to comply, but Mrs Greenway was far too full of herself and her own concerns to care much for listening. Moreover, Mr Greenway came in from his fields, and it was dinner time.

Mr Greenway greeted Gertrude with hearty cordiality; he seemed to be very proud of his wife, and asked Gertrude if she thought her changed from what she was as Martha Slocum.

Mrs Greenway appeared to take great interest in what her husband had been about during the morning, and to know almost as much of farming matters as he did himself. Mr Greenway appeared to have a high opinion of his wife's judgment. They were very



happy, so thoroughly contented with themselves and each other..

Gertrude had never been in such a warm, genial, domestic atmosphere in her life ;— they were a well-matched pair.

After dinner the babies were all brought down, and Mr Greenway left the two ladies to compare nursery notes, whilst he went back to the field to superintend his men, his wife calling after him to bid him come back early, as the people were coming at four o'clock.

After he was gone Mrs Greenway gave Gertrude all the details about her marriage, and indulged in a few natural reflections and observations upon her husband's relations, displaying a little human and feminine jealousy of his sisters, who at first had been inclined to think that she had made a better match than their brother—but the bickerings were very slight, and they did not hate each other very much—for sisters-in-law.

Two of the Miss Greenways arrived shortly

after. They were older than Mrs Greenway—stout, good-looking young women, with a decided way of expressing their opinions; they evidently were accustomed to be considered the sensible women of the neighbourhood. They were disposed to be very civil to Gertrude, but were much more disposed to talk of their own subjects than to hear about fresh ones; and as Gertrude had been trained to be a good listener, they got on together extremely well.

Mrs Slocum and her youngest daughter arrived the next. She was kind and motherly, and nursed Gertrude's baby.

The vicar, with his wife and daughter, came in. The doctor and his maiden sister followed, a lady with light hair and blue eyes, who had been both pretty and accomplished, though never very sensible; she still had an air of juvenility, like a well-preserved winter apple. She was certainly past fifty, but still was a pretender to matrimony, and it was said was extremely well-disposed to

smile on Mr Conran, the solicitor, of Dunnington. There was also Miss Blackmore, an elderly maiden lady of strong masculine habits and tastes, who had convicted three men, and caused them to be transported, by her evidence on a trial for poaching. She had once shot a robber, and she rode about the country on horseback alone. She was a lady of ancient family, of which she was very proud. She farmed her own land, knew as much law as any J. P. on the bench, and was looked upon as one of the *gentlemen* of the neighbourhood.

She despised female conversation about servants and children; so that, after cross-questioning Gertrude by way of commencing acquaintance, she relapsed into silence, and reserved her social talents until some other gentlemen should arrive.

Amongst the guests was a man who had formerly been very much in love with Gertrude, but he had been an awkward, shy, silent youth, and Gertrude had maltreated

him in proportion to the power he gave her. His father was a tanner, and Gertrude would have nothing to say to a man in her own sphere of life; but it had been with him another version of 'Cymon and Iphigenia.' Gertrude's elegance and beauty had awakened in the youth a perception of grace and refinement. He had cultivated his mind, and had expended a legacy of two hundred pounds in procuring for himself some classical learning under an Oxford graduate, and in gathering a small library. He had now succeeded to his father's business, and was a thriving man—the best *parti roulant* in the neighbourhood; but he showed no disposition to marry. He had a kind, quiet voice, and a singularly unobtrusive manner. He met Gertrude like an old friend, without either consciousness or embarrassment. He sat beside her, and talked of old times.

Gertrude had been proud, discontented, and miserable in those days, but now it was great comfort to speak about them, and

to recal a portion of the life that she had thrown away before she knew its value. One great source of her suffering, though she was scarcely aware of it, had in reality arisen from being separated from all who had belonged to her early life—that despised life to which she now looked back with such regretful yearning.

Mrs Greenway came up to her with vivacity, and took hold of her arm, saying, with what she intended to be playful raillery:

“Well, upon my honour! If that is the London fashion in which you married women talk to young men, we must look about us all. We are going into the other room to tea now,—you are not going to keep our best bachelor all to yourself. Mr George, off with you, and attend to those girls. I shall not let you come near Gertrude again all the evening. I shall warn her husband against you!”

A scene of much giggling and some confusion now took place before everybody was

seated at the tea-table,—which was covered with piles of muffins and crumpets, buns, maccaroons, and queen cakes.

Mr Augustus and Simon Morley made their appearance. Mrs Greenway, who was on remarkably good terms with herself that evening, and who considered she had great powers of “quizzing,” told Mr Augustus of his wife’s “goings on,” as she called them. Mr Augustus showed his charming versatility, he suited himself to his company, and made himself so fascinating that all the ladies considered Gertrude rather unworthy of having such a husband.

The gentlemen, too, thought him a pleasant fellow. After playing one rubber in superior style, he deserted the whist table for the noisy and laughing round game that was going on in another corner,—where his jokes and witticisms and compliments were beyond anything ever heard before. The vicar’s daughter asked him if he were a military officer, to which he replied, “No, but his father had been

in the navy, which might account for her question!" The laughing caused by this repartee was enough to have rewarded all the wit for six months at a club.

A hot supper followed which differed in nothing from a dinner—it was done justice to; "something warm before they went out into the air" followed this; and at ten o'clock cloaks and wrappings were sought up.

Simon Morley had ordered a chaise to come for Gertrude, and into it were crammed all the ladies whose homes lay towards Dunnington. Simon Morley and the men preferred walking. Mr Greenway attended his guests to the outer gate, and, with reiterated "good nights," the party at last separated.

Simon Morley and Mr Augustus reached home as soon as Gertrude, who had to set everybody down at their doors. The coach gates were closed, and only a sleepy stable-boy remained up to receive the horses. Mrs Simon had retired for the night, at which her husband greatly rejoiced; but he found

her wide awake when he got up-stairs. He was thankful to put out his candle, and pull the bedclothes over his ears, to shut out the sound of her observations.



## CHAPTER IX.

"WELL," said Simon Morley at breakfast the next morning, helping himself to a large piece of pigeon-pie, "I must say I think Mrs Greenway is as nice a woman as ever stepped! I wonder, wife, you and she have not been better friends—so kind and friendly, and so pleasant-spoken as she is. I don't know when I have enjoyed myself better than I did last night. I say we must invite the Greenways here—we might make up a nice party of old friends now Ger. is come to help you entertain them."

"Very well, Mr Simon Morley; if you wish to begin keeping company and giving suppers, of course you can do so—perhaps you would like to have a ball too?"

"That is not a bad notion," rejoined her husband. "We have more room than they have at Lane End. What is that great assembly-room for that we should not have some good out of it?"

"Certainly," said Mrs Simon, sarcastically, "and maybe you will ask all the people in the town to fill it; pray do so, if you feel inclined." Then turning to Gertrude, she said, "I know your objections to sitting in the bar, pray do not think it necessary to stop to keep *me* company. You are used to seeing none but quality, and I cannot do with idlers here; so you had better sit at your embroidery up-stairs, in the nursery, and if any visitors come they can be shown in to you."

Gertrude coloured painfully. "I will sit in whatever room you choose; but, if you are

busy, is there nothing I can do to help you?"

"Oh dear no, thank you," said Mrs Simon, with a little sharp laugh. "You would be quite out of your element here *now*, and your mother would never forgive such a thing—she thinks you ought to be put under a glass case, and kept to look at."

"Say no more, Ger.," said Mr Augustus, rather crossly, "but go and sit wherever Mrs Simon wishes; it is not for you to be making objections."

"Ger. does not like to be moped," added Mr Simon; "she shall come out and have a ride with me. We will go and see the hounds throw off."

Mrs Simon's thin lips were drawn into a fixed smile; her cold grey eyes looked out into the perspective of the china-closet that opened out of the bar.

"Thank you, Simon," said Gertrude; "but you forget the baby. Mrs Simon's nurse could scarcely manage the two of them. I think I cannot go with you this morning."

"Besides, Gertrude is quite out of practice; she would only break her neck or lame the horse," interposed Mr Augustus, with an air of matrimonial authority. "You cannot do better, Gertrude, than put yourself under Mrs Simon's guidance whilst you remain here, and follow her advice in all things, as I intend to do," he added, with a supplementary glance that made the virtuous Mrs Simon feel convinced that she was a very superior woman, and that Mr Augustus did justice to her excellences.

Gertrude obeyed and left the room. The nurse, either prompted by Mrs Simon or instigated by a sense of her own convenience, asked Gertrude to hold her baby, to which, of course, Gertrude consented.

This day was the beginning of months to Gertrude; it fixed her position as *dependent* upon Mrs Simon. Of course the nurse could not be expected to wash another baby's things in addition, so Gertrude washed and ironed for her own baby. She was awkward at

first, but she soon learned. It was no great hardship in itself, but the nurse was systematically disobliging, and seemed to consider her as much an intruder in her nursery as Mrs Simon did when she went down stairs.

All Gertrude's old acquaintance made a point of calling upon her—but they made remarks at being shown into the nursery, and as Mrs Simon had conceived she had some cause of feud with most of the families in the town, she contrived to make Gertrude feel that it was very disagreeable to have so many people coming about the house who had no business there.

The party that had been projected by her husband was after a short time adopted by Mrs Simon, who did not see "why she might not hold her head as high as Mrs Greenway if she chose," and she did choose to do so on this occasion.

Everybody accepted their invitation. Mrs Simon, in an unusually good humour and

the consciousness of a new satin gown, made herself extremely pleasant—as most ill-tempered people can, when they have a mind. Mr Augustus was indefatigable in his attentions, and she was proud to show off her handsome brother-in-law, “whose father had been an admiral, whose uncle was a baronet, and who himself was expecting an office under government;” he stood in quite a different position to his wife. Gertrude played country dances for them, and exerted herself to amuse the company—but all she did was received as a matter of course, and everybody felt quite free to criticise all she said and did, and to find that she was “proud,” “conceited,” “insincere,” and “very affected;” whilst Mrs Matley, the rich draper’s wife, declared to her nearest neighbour, “that Mrs Donnelly’s dress was shamefully extravagant, that it must have cost at least ten guineas without the making—and that she wore a lace-shawl fit for a duchess.” This was quite true.

Gertrude wore the silk dress which her

husband had given her at the christening, and the shawl was the lace-veil he had given her at the same time;—she had made up the dress herself—which the worthy Mrs Matley never dreamed of suspecting, and when she inveighed against the folly and wickedness of “people in Mrs Donnelly’s circumstances” spending so much money on dress, she never reflected that it *might* possibly have been bought *before* “the circumstances” began.

The party, however, was none the less pleasant because Mrs Donnelly was there to find food for scandal and gossip;—it raised Mrs Simon’s popularity. Nobody had ever imagined she could be “so pleasant.”

To date from this party, everybody in Dunnington was fully alive to the fact “that poor Mr Donnelly had been brought to ruin by the extravagance of his wife.”

Reports of her wastefulness, her extravagance, her love of dress and company, were abroad, until everybody felt themselves immeasurably better, and wiser, and more prudent

than poor Gertrude, to say nothing of being much "better off,"—which is a cardinal virtue everywhere.

It is always pleasant to find that people's misfortunes have been brought upon themselves, and that Providence in its dispensations has only "served them right;" because when they are objects of compassion it is the imperative duty of their friends to assist them, which is often inconvenient and generally disagreeable; indeed, it is always expensive to maintain a virtue at one's own cost—there is a natural instinct to set it up at the expense of others—and it is a moral duty not to interfere in a case that is to serve the sufferers "for a lesson as long as they live!"

Gertrude's old acquaintance became patronising when they were not cool; but their patronage brought no results beyond inviting her to dine or to drink tea with them, that they might see her dresses, and obtain patterns of her sleeves and collars, and



hear what was the fashion in London, for which she was rewarded by being abused for her "shameful love of dress," and her husband was proportionately pitied for being "tied to such an extravagant, helpless woman."

Mrs Greenway was the best friend Gertrude had; she really liked her old playfellow, and she stood up stoutly for her when she heard her abused, and she was constantly coming to fetch Gertrude and the baby to spend the day with her. But Mrs Greenway was a coarse, prosperous woman, and far too full of herself and her own concerns to be able to feel any sympathy with Gertrude's trials; she patronised her extremely and ostentatiously, until even her good nature was scarcely sufficient to redeem the coarseness—she spoke of her as "poor Mrs Donnelly," and wondered to see "Gertrude Morley's high spirit so come down." Women certainly have the gift of tormenting each other beyond what any dispensation of Providence can effect.

As to Mr Augustus, he found himself

as comfortable as ever he had been in his life. There was plenty of the best to eat and drink; there was plenty of coursing and shooting, and as he was a good shot, and fond of field sports, he was very popular amongst the men, he had the use of any horse in his brother-in-law's stables; he often rode to cover, and having a dexterous impudence and a rambling acquaintance with a variety of persons, he contrived, on the strength of "mutual intimate friends," to pick up an acquaintance with several members of the hunt,—who not only invited him to dinner, but occasionally to stop at their country-houses, if they had a party that wanted enlivening. His good jokes, songs, and stories, all made somewhat broader to suit his meridian, made him a valuable guest at a dinner-table, when country neighbours and country squires were to be entertained, and golden opinions laid by against the great day of a future election.

When at home there was as much smoking

and drinking to be had as he chose, and plenty of company, for he was voted to be "the life and soul of every party." He drew plenty of loungers into the bar, or, when Mrs Simon was in one of her sharp-edged tempers, he sat in the little market parlour, No. 2; where Simon Morley junior sat with them much oftener and longer than was consistent with the prosecution of his business.

Mrs Simon continued to be very proud of her brother-in-law, and he could manage her better than any one else, though she often tried to make him feel her temper; but as he was profoundly indifferent, and not at all troubled with delicate feelings, it was quite out of her power to annoy him; indeed, her attempts to do so always recoiled upon herself.

He was so useful to her on all great emergencies, such as rent-days, clubs, and public dinners, that she grew at last to be afraid of displeasing him, and listened to his opinion with a deference that delighted her

husband, who enjoyed seeing her "brought to reason," as he called it.

Mr Augustus was, moreover, a capital judge of horses and dogs—he was also a first-rate horse doctor; he was consequently an authority in the stable-yard, and much looked up to by the grooms, ostlers, and postboys who congregated there.

Simon Morley was thankful to have so pleasant a companion and so useful an ally; he would have made Augustus welcome to live with him all the rest of his life; and even Mrs Simon, stingy as she was by nature, and little addicted to giving away anything, made him frequent presents—indeed, he had the secret of coaxing her out of anything he wished.

His social talents were once on the point of bringing him a substantial return. Sir Willoughby Bethel, a rich baronet, whom he had frequently met out hunting, and at various dinner-parties, offered him the situation of his land steward at a handsome

salary; but the blood of all the Donnellys rose at the idea of being any man's servant and taking wages. Moreover, the situation would have required no inconsiderable exercise of industry, exactness, activity, and various other somewhat fatiguing virtues, with which the incomparable Augustus scarcely felt himself endowed; he therefore declined the situation with the air of a prince, and declared that he had been requested "to hold himself in readiness to receive a government appointment."

## CHAPTER X.

POOR Gertrude had to pay the penalty of her husband's immunity. There is nothing gratuitous in the world—payment is rigorously exacted some time or other—and it was from Gertrude that Mrs Simon repaid herself for the complacency she showed to Mr Augustus. Mr Augustus told his wife, with great indignation, of the offer he had received to become Sir Willoughby's land agent; and he calmed his offended dignity by a few expletives at the insolence of any man asking the like of

him to become his out-door servant to collect his rents.

“But, dear Augustus, the salary would have been very handsome, and you might still have accepted a government situation, if one should have offered; do you think you were quite wise to refuse a certainty? It is so miserable living dependent here.”

“I wish, Gertrude, you would talk about what you understand. Do you think it is fit or right for the like of me to demean myself by taking a bailiff’s place? But it is because you have no good blood in you, or you would not think of such a thing for me.”

“It would be far more honourable than to live here dependent on my brother,” said Gertrude, firmly. “Have you any plans at all, or do you expect to go on living here for ever? I do not see how we can do that; we have no right to be a burden to the family.”

“You are mighty delicate,” said her hus-

band, scornfully. "Why should you not go to your own side of the house? Your people are rich enough, and what have they ever done for you, or for me either, beyond giving us these few months' board? I am not going to turn out till it suits my arrangements. If you could only humour Mrs Simon, and give in to her a little, you might be as comfortable as the day is long; but you have such a bad temper that you can live with nobody."

"How have I ever shown my temper, Augustus?" asked Gertrude, her eyes filling with tears.

"Yes, you may look; but you *have* a bad temper. You could not agree with my mother and Sophy, and now you quarrel with Mrs Simon because she does not flatter you, and is just a little sharp in her ways."

"But, Augustus, what right have we to expect my brother to support us in idleness? Will you at least write to your uncle about that place you said he would ask for you?"



I should feel then as if we were trying to do something to help ourselves."

"I would thank you to mind your own business, and not to be bothering me. I suppose I know my own concerns, and can manage them without your help. I should never have been here at all if it had not been for you."

Mr Augustus took up his hat and went up the street, extremely ruffled at his wife's pertinacity and want of consideration for his feelings. Gertrude, left alone, leaned her head upon her arms and wept bitterly; they were tears of humiliation and hopelessness. Her husband had never so spoken to her before. She had hitherto cherished a faint hope that Augustus would take some steps to extricate himself from his difficulties; she had believed him to be only thoughtless and idle — now she recognised him as worthless. His entire want of all energy and independence—his entire indifference to her comfort—his unkindness—all combined to

make this the very bitterest moment she had yet known. The last relic of matrimonial superstition was swept away, and she felt an unmitigated contempt for Mr Augustus Donnelly, which, however, her own conscience turned into a still more bitter self-contempt and self-condemnation.

“I should never have been here if it had not been for you.” It was quite true this—she had no one but herself to blame; if she had done her duty to her parents, she would not have been left thus helpless and miserable; she had despised her home, and now she was justly despised and destitute of any home to call her own. Her tears gradually ceased to flow; her own disobedience and ingratitude, the vanity and discontent of her conduct, were presented to her mind with the strong, stern emphasis of conscience; she was “filled with the fruit of her own ways,” and her punishment was no more than she deserved.

No sooner was this conviction forced upon her, than she became conscious of a great

calm. She ceased to pity herself; she accepted her punishment, and a strong patience filled her heart. She felt that, to be all that was left for her, the only expiation she could make for the sin that had lain at the root of her life. Light had arisen upon her darkness. She knelt down; she was not conscious of using any words, but with her whole heart she surrendered herself, desiring only that henceforth she might not desire to do her own will, but to do whatever duty might be laid upon her.

It was the beginning of a new life for Gertrude. All outward things remained as they had been, but the spirit with which she regarded them was changed, and from that moment she had taken her first step in a better life.

She looked round to see what there was that she could do. At first it struck her as a bright thought that she might set up as a milliner and dressmaker, for she had great taste, and was not without skill, having for

some time past made up all her own dresses ; but when she spoke of it to her husband, he flew into a passion, and declared that “no wife of his should manty-make for a parcel of farmers’ wives,” and bade her not attempt such a thing at her peril.

Gertrude acquiesced, and contented herself for the moment with making up a handsome purple satin for Mrs Simon, which her husband had given her as a fairing ; he gave Gertrude a dress at the same time, of much commoner materials, which had greatly raised his wife’s jealousy, and she grumbled at his extravagance for a month.

Gertrude waited patiently for some opening. Little Clarissa progressed from a baby into an engaging and lovely child.

Mrs Morley had kept Gertrude supplied with money, but she did it under difficulties, inasmuch as her husband was very suspicious, and constantly declared that “until that lazy, worthless hound, turned his hand to work, he should not see one sixpence of his money.”

"But, Simon, what can he do? He has never been brought up to work."

"More 's the pity, then. He might turn a wheel, if he could do 'nothing better; but he is born lazy, and would any day rather beg than work. I wonder he is not ashamed to live on Simon and his wife. I desire you give neither him nor Gertrude money. She is every bit as bad as he is."

Poor Mrs Morley made no reply; but she helped her daughter secretly.

The opportunity Gertrude was looking for came at last.

The young woman who assisted Mrs Simon left somewhat suddenly, in consequence of a violent altercation with Mrs Simon, in which both parties had indulged themselves in the luxury of "speaking their minds," which is generally a hazardous process, something like meddling with fireworks. It happened, inconveniently enough, that Mrs Simon was looking forwards to her confinement in a short time. She was in a dilemma where

to turn for another assistant, but she scorned the idea of attempting to propitiate the offended Hebe. Gertrude offered to fill her place, at least until Mrs Simon should have leisure to suit herself better.

The spirit in which a thing is done always makes itself felt. Gertrude made her offer with genuine good feeling, and the hearty desire that it should be accepted. Mrs Simon felt the spell, though she tossed back her head with a little scornful laugh, and said—

“Well, to be sure! Who would ever have thought of your doing such a thing? I am sure I don’t ask you to demean yourself. Of course you cannot be expected to understand the business, and I would much prefer a regular servant.”

But Gertrude pleaded that she recollected her mother’s method, and that Mrs Simon might soon train her. She besides expressed her wish to do something to requite the hospitality that had been shown to them all.

Gertrude asked it as a favour—Mrs Simon granted it as such.

Gertrude resumed with thankfulness the position which four years previously she had thrown off so impatiently, but she “wore her rue with a difference;” it was Mrs Simon, and not her mother, whom she now served.

The great difference was, however, in Gertrude herself, and the altered spirit in which she accepted the situation which had formerly cost her such an agony of pride and false shame. Gertrude exerted herself heartily to become an efficient assistant to Mrs Simon, and she succeeded.

During that worthy lady’s confinement Gertrude managed the business in a manner that highly delighted her brother, and which filled poor Mrs Morley, who came over for a few days, with admiration and regret. To see her Gertrude a servant in what had been her father’s house pained her bitterly; but

although she wept over the matter with Mrs Slocum, she had the strength of mind to say nothing to Gertrude, except to give her all the practical advice and help she could with her own experience in the business.

Gertrude exerted herself to seem happy and comfortable before her mother, and indeed she felt much happier than she had been for many months.

Mr Augustus made no objection to this state of things. He fondly hoped that people would not understand the arrangement, and it removed any scruple he might entertain about settling himself in peace until the 'government' situation should restore him from his state of social eclipse.

By degrees Gertrude reaped the natural result of her conduct. She had ceased to look at her position through the eyes of other people, and she was surprised to find how completely that took the sting out of her mortifications; for we could all bear what



actually befalls us, if it were not for the idea of what other people would think of it.

When Mrs Simon got about again, she could not resist the malicious pleasure of trying to humiliate Gertrude as much as possible ; especially she insisted upon her attending to all the carriage visitors, in the hope that she might chance to meet with some of her old acquaintance amongst them ; but Gertrude had once for all accepted her position, and she had lost all desire to be thought different from what she really was. She lost nothing in real refinement, it was only vanity and the love of appearances which had been burnt out of her nature.

When everybody in Dunnington had thoroughly informed themselves about her circumstances, and when everyone had made all the remarks, wise and foolish, that occurred to them, and had sat in judgment until they were somewhat weary of pronouncing " their decided opinion," they ceased to talk about her, or at least much moderated " the

rancour of their tongues;" and Gertrude felt herself much happier than when she was "the beautiful Miss Morley," the toast of the neighbourhood, and the expected heiress of a handsome fortune; but when, at the same time, she was ashamed of her parents, disgusted with her home, and only anxious to get away at all hazards.

## CHAPTER XI.

A GOOD clergyman once said, "that when persons have once set themselves to learn the lesson their trials are intended to teach, they are delivered from them; but not until they have become perfectly patient and willing to endure."

Gertrude had pretty well reached this point; she and her husband had been somewhere about a year and a half inmates of the 'Mettingham Arms,' when one day a letter came to Augustus from old Mrs Donnelly. After the break up of affairs, the old lady

had cleverly avoided paying any of the debts (all the bills being made out to Augustus); she had even, by dint of romantic misrepresentations, softened the hearts of the creditors, who believed her to be a victim as well as themselves. She had removed her furniture to a warehouse, and taken refuge with her daughter at a distant country-house, in the county of Tipperary, belonging to her husband's brother, the baronet of the family.

Here she learned the degraded and deplorable situation of her son—living with an inn-keeper, his wife's brother, and liable to be seen by all the nobility and gentry of his acquaintance travelling that road!

When she had regained her self-possession, after the distressing events which caused her departure from London, she ceased not to entreat and torment Sir Lucius Donnelly to exert himself to obtain some foreign appointment for his nephew.

People in this world obtain more by perseverance than by any other quality; "the

unjust steward," in the parable, is a type of human nature—we will all do more for those who, by their continual entreaty, "weary us," than for those who simply *deserve* service at our hands; and Mrs Donnelly so effectually wearied her brother-in-law, that, on one of his friends being appointed governor of some settlement on the coast of Africa, he asked him to take Augustus Donnelly as secretary, and to make himself generally useful.

The Governor, who was going into honourable exile on account of his debts, made no difficulty in assenting to the proposal; in fact, he was very glad at the prospect of having such a "jolly dog" to share in such a dismal expedition.

Mrs Donnelly was a proud and happy woman the day she could write to her son that he was appointed private secretary to his Excellency Sir Simon Bulrush, Governor of Fort-Fever Point, on the coast of Calabar. It did not distress this Roman mother that her son, the peerless Augustus, would in all

probability die the first thing after reaching his ominously-named station, and be buried, by way of taking possession of his post. It was, in her opinion, infinitely better that he should die an "Honourable Secretary," than live in obscure disgrace at a country inn.

"Hang it, Ger.!" said Mr Augustus, tossing the letter to his wife, "the old lady seems to take it very coolly; but I don't see the fun of leaving comfortable quarters to go and die of yellow fever, and be food for land crabs at a place I never heard of when I learned geography. I shall make free to decline my uncle's valuable appointment."

"Have you the hope of anything better?" said Gertrude, sadly. "Lord Southend seems to have forgotten you, and we cannot live here always. I would inquire about it at least before refusing it."

"I shall do whatever I please, without reference to your sage opinion, so you need not trouble yourself to advise me," said Mr Augustus with ineffable dignity, and, putting

on his hat, whistled to a pointer, and sauntered across the yard. He found himself, as we have said, very comfortable indeed, and he had no notion of perilling his valuable life by going to the coast of Africa. He swore at his uncle for not obtaining him something better, and had determined to stand out for some other "stroke of fortune;" but something occurred in the course of the day to alter his determination.

Resigned as Gertrude had become to her lot, this sudden prospect of independence for her husband, and the probability of its being refused by his fatuity, was too much for her equanimity; and she went up to her room and cried heartily, the first comfort of the kind she had indulged in for some months.

She was aroused by the voice of Mrs Simon calling upon her name with great asperity of tone. She hastily started up, and, descending to the bar, found there had been an influx of carriages all requiring post-horses for the next stage; some of the inmates stop-

ping to lunch, and others impatient to proceed. The family in No. 4 wanted their bill, and the gentleman in No. 6 was complaining of an overcharge. Mrs Simon was in the worst of all possible humours; and, as she did not venture to scold the servants, she vented it on Gertrude.

Gertrude set to work to reduce the confusion that reigned into something like order; she pacified the indignant gentleman, and expedited the post-boys, and had forgotten her own immediate affairs, when she was startled to see Augustus, flushed and hurried, stride into the house and proceed up-stairs. There he took refuge in the nursery, the door of which he locked after him.

The nurse and children were preparing for a walk, and were terrified out of their senses when Mr Augustus entered so abruptly; and their alarm was not diminished by seeing him proceed to conceal himself in the closet.

“ Goodness gracious, sir ! what is the matter ? ”



“Go and tell Gertrude, Mrs Donnelly, that I must speak to her immediately ; do not let any one hear you ; lock the door, and take the key with you ; never mind the children, you can fetch them afterwards.”

But the nurse was not going to abandon her precious charge. She unlocked the door, and took them with her, getting out of the room as expeditiously as possible.

Gertrude was in the bar, speaking to the gentleman who had complained of being overcharged.

“Please, ma’am, Mr Donnelly is up-stairs in the nursery, and would be glad to see you. I think you had best go directly, or he may do himself a mischief. I declare he quite frightened me by the way he came in.

“I also should be glad to see Mr Donnelly,” said the gentleman ; “so you had best tell him to come down, as I shall not leave the house until I have had some conversation with him.”

But poor Gertrude looked so alarmed and

distressed that the gentleman said, "I am very sorry to cause you any distress, madam; your husband has no doubt already recognised me as a—creditor; my coming was purely accidental, but I shall not leave without seeing him. His best plan will be to come immediately; no doubt there is a private room where we may settle our business."

"Indeed we have had no money since we left London," said Gertrude, earnestly.

"Possibly not," said the other, drily. "Mr Donnelly is a gentleman who seldom has money when it comes to paying; but you had best go to him, or he will fancy some mischief is preparing; you may tell him that I mean him no harm."

## CHAPTER XII.

SCARCELY able to support herself, Gertrude hastened up-stairs to the nursery. The room was empty! "Augustus, where are you?" she called; but there was no answer. "Augustus!" called she in a louder tone, whilst a sickening apprehension, of she knew not what, made her scarcely able to articulate. After a moment the closet-door opened and showed the pale face of Augustus.

"What an infernal time you have been," said he, "and what a noise you make. Is he gone."

"No; he says he knows you, and must

see you ; but that he means you no harm, and did not come on purpose."

"Confound the fellow," muttered Augustus, "he will set the whole pack on me now, and so snug as I have been from them all! Was there ever such a piece of ill-luck!"

In a short time, however, he allowed himself to be soothed and persuaded into descending to meet his creditor.

"You stay with me, Ger.; he will be afraid of threatening too much before you; and mind you stand up to all I say."

The 'creditor' in question was a wine and spirit merchant to whom Augustus owed 120*l.*, and for which he had given his note of hand, which had already been renewed more than once. He was walking up and down the room, with his hands in his pockets, and looked very gloomy; but creditors, with so slender a chance of being paid, cannot be expected to have pleasant countenances.

Augustus met him with a bravado of frankness which was awkward enough.

"Now perhaps the lady will retire, as I in no wise wish to hurt the feelings of any female; and you are aware you have not behaved as a gentleman ought."

Gertrude petitioned to stay, and Augustus declared he had no secrets from his wife.

A long and stormy interview followed. At first the wine merchant, who had learned the relationship, and knowing the Morleys, father and son, to be people of substance, thought they would be responsible for him; he refused to listen to any terms except the money down.

At length, however, Gertrude in great despair brought in her brother, entreating him to "save Augustus." In answer to that appeal he first quietly put her out of the room, and then convinced the man that neither he nor his father would pay one farthing of Mr Augustus Donnelly's debts. The creditor became more tractable, and, in consideration of being promised ten shillings in the pound, to be paid out of Mr Augustus Donnelly's first salary, which

was guaranteed by Simon Morley, he consented to compound the debt, and to keep the secret of his whereabouts from every one. He thought it highly problematical whether there would be ever a second quarter to receive.

This incident of course dispelled any doubts that Mr Augustus might have entertained about accepting the situation. He wrote a grateful letter to his uncle, entreating assistance for his outfit. As there was now every prospect of finally getting rid of him, his uncle sent him twenty-five pounds and a prescription for the yellow fever.

Old Mrs Donnelly, who, with all her sins, really loved her son, sent him ten pounds more; and Miss Sophia sent him half-a-dozen pairs of Limerick gloves towards his outfit, and begged he would not fail to collect some gold dust, ostrich feathers, and elephants' teeth, "as curiosities for her cabinet."

## CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN the news that Mr Augustus was appointed to go with a real governor out to Africa spread through Dunnington, there were diversities of opinion on the subject, but it made Mr Augustus himself into a hero, and he had to go through quite a course of farewell hospitalities.

Mrs Simon was perplexed in her mind. She was very sorry to lose Augustus—it was gall and wormwood to think that Gertrude would be raised to a position so far above her own; but then, it was some con-

solation to reflect that she would lose her beautiful complexion in such a climate, and would look quite an old woman when she returned.

"Of course Gertrude will go along with her husband," was the remark of everybody in Dunnington.

"I suppose your mother will take charge of your child?" said old Mrs Slocum to her.

"I have not the least intention of leaving my child," replied Gertrude quietly. "Augustus is quite willing that I should remain behind; indeed I do not suppose it is a place where females could well go."

"But, my dear, do you think you are right to send your husband where you would not go yourself? A wife's duty is always to be with her husband and share his fortune. In my young days—if Mathew Slocum had been going to the desert where the children of Israel wandered for forty years and more—I should have gone with him. I think it would be breaking your



marriage vow if you let him go out alone—your child ought to come after your husband.”

“But, Mrs Slocum, Augustus does not want me; I should die out there. There is no accommodation for me. I should be dreadfully in the way.”

“No matter, my dear, it is your duty to follow your husband; if you leave him there is no saying what sin and mischief he may not fall into, and if he were to die, how you would reflect upon yourself! Such a fine young man too,—and the father of your child! Nothing can excuse a woman from her duty to her husband—it is like nothing else in the world.”

Gertrude looked hot and annoyed, and said,—

“Well, Mrs Slocum, whether it is my duty or not, I shall not go to Africa. I shall stop at home, and do my duty by my child.”

“Ah!” sighed the curate’s wife—*ci-devant* Miss Matilda Slocum; “but you know, Ger-

trude, that we are not to choose our duties, and a wife's duty is so plain and easy."

Gertrude made no reply, and it was soon spread throughout Dunnington that Gertrude was quite without feeling and was going to desert her husband; the charitable feeling of the neighbourhood ran so high in consequence, that many declared that if her child were to die it would only be a punishment she had deserved.

If the truth must be told, poor Mrs Morley believed in this code of conjugal devotion. A husband in her eyes was something sacred and peculiar; he had ceased to be a man, and was invested with mystical rights and attributes. She had no doubt but that Gertrude would go, and she burst into such a transport of grief when the news of the appointment reached her, that her husband was moved from his usual surly composure—he laid down his pipe, and said compassionately,—

"Don't cry, missis, don't cry ; there is nothing to take on about in that way that I can see."

"Oh Simon ! it is losing her twice over—I shall never live to see her come back."

"But what should she go away for ? I don't see why she should not come back to us, when that husband of hers is fairly gone, and a good riddance she will have of him ; it does not signify where he goes to—it is chaps like him who ought to be sent to such places, and leave better folks at home ; if he dies he will be no loss to anybody."

"Oh, Simon, how can you talk so hard-hearted ; he is her own husband !"

"Aye, more's the pity ! But I'll tell you what—I will drive over to Dunnington to-day, and see what Ger. says ; if she will stop behind, she shall have a home here, and the child too—and I will never cast the past into her teeth again. Maybe I have been too hard upon her sometimes. When I have

gone over there lately I have seen her very handy in the bar, helping Simon's wife—she has lost that confounded pride that has been her ruin."

Simon Morley was as good as his word, and that very afternoon Gertrude saw her father drive into the yard in his old yellow gig, drawn by his favourite horse Sharper.

He came straight into the bar, where Gertrude was busily engaged in transferring some figures from a slate into her book. Mrs Simon received him with many demonstrations of welcome, but Gertrude, after shaking hands with him, resumed her occupation.

Mrs Simon ensconced him in her own corner, and supplied him with a pipe and a glass of hot rum and water—but he did not seem so amenable to her civilities as usual.

"Well, Ger.," said he, after he had smoked some time, during which he had been watching her in silence ; "so your husband's grand friends have made a gentleman of him again?"

"Yes—he has received an appointment, such as it is."

"Well, your mother has sent me over to fetch you and the child—to stop with us whilst he is away; when do you reckon you can come?—when does he go?"

"The time is not fixed yet, and perhaps Mrs Simon may not like to spare me till she meets with somebody else."

"Oh pray do not think of me," said Mrs Simon, with a toss of her head; "you are not so precious as all that comes to—do not let *me* stand in your way, I beg."

"You are quite right, missis—Ger. must come back to us, and let us have some comfort of her. She has been a good wench since she came here. I hate pride, but work never shamed a-body yet—nought but idleness does that, and now thou hast shown that thou art not above work, thou art welcome to home."

This speech rewarded Gertrude for all her troubles. Mr Augustus entered shortly after,

and Simon Morley, with more civility than might have been expected, repeated his proposal to take Gertrude home.

Mr Augustus, who had grown considerably grander since his appointment, expressed himself like the fine gentleman he was, and gave his gracious permission for Gertrude to remain at The Cottage with her parents until he could send for her to join him.

Stimulated with the prospect of getting rid of him for good, Simon Morley presented his son-in-law with ten pounds towards his outfit—so that the preparations of Mr Augustus were on a very comfortable scale. Gertrude had enough wifely feeling to take pride in sending him away handsomely provided, and she had even a sense of complacency in seeing how well he looked in his new clothes.

She would have gone with him to Bristol, to see him on board the ship, but Mr Augustus preferred parting from her at Dunnington, observing “that they must begin

to be saving now they had the opportunity, and that they might as well save the money, and part at the beginning of the journey instead of the end."

Few women become really hardened to indifference on the part of their husbands; there is a nerve in their heart that quivers long after all love seems to have died out.

Gertrude sighed, and felt a pang of bitterness at this unconscious evidence of the entire absence of all affection for her, but she hid it under a quiet face.

"As you please, Augustus; you will write the last thing, and tell me how you get on board."

"Of course I will. Keep your spirits up, and do get out of this confounded place as soon as you can. I am endorsed "on her Majesty's service" now, and this is not the sort of thing for you any longer. I wonder how you have been able to make a companion of Mrs Simon so long; you have no proper pride in you."

Gertrude did not reply to this rational speech ; she had no energy to waste in trying to reduce things to their logical consistency.

The morning dawned upon which Mr Augustus was to depart from Dunnington. Gertrude got up to give him an early breakfast. The chaise was to be at the door at five o'clock, to take him to meet the Bristol mail.

Mr Augustus was in charming spirits at the prospect of getting away.

“ Good bye, Ger. ; take care of yourself and the child. I will send for you whenever there comes a stroke of fortune. Write to me sometimes to say how you go on ; enclose your letters to Sir Simon. And now good bye. I hope all my trunks are on the chaise, and that you have forgotten nothing—good bye, good bye.”

And Mr Augustus sprang into the chaise. Early as it was, many heads were at the windows as he passed through the town. He looked back, and saw Gertrude still stand-



ing looking after him; a turn in the street hid her from his sight. Mr Augustus went on his way too much rejoiced in being set free from Dunnington to feel any tender regrets. Gertrude turned to re-enter the house, with a mixed feeling of relief and bitterness.

The overstrain of fatigue and excitement had ceased. She sat down and wept bitterly; she was left belonging to nobody, and she felt very lonely. In the afternoon, however, her father came to fetch her, and in the rejoicing her mother made over her return she grew comforted, and forgot the past in the quiet rest of being once more by her mother's side.

## CHAPTER XIV.

MR AUGUSTUS wrote from Bristol in the most charming spirits; he had joined Sir Simon Bulrush, with whom he was enchanted. He spoke of "the good people at Dunnington" with an air of elegant superciliousness which would have been amusing to a stranger, but which gave Gertrude a bitter feeling of contempt as she recollected the contented servility with which he had flattered Mrs Simon and lived upon her brother.

The fact was, that Mr Augustus had

thrown off the chrysalis of obscurity, and had once more emerged into the "ampler ether and diviner air" of polite society, towards which he filled precisely the same position which he had done in Dunnington.

A few hasty lines, written subsequently, told her that he had embarked, and Gertrude was ashamed of the deep breath of relief she drew when she was sure that he was fairly gone, and that there would be no misgiving of any of the arrangements.

Mrs Morley, who took it for granted that she *must* fret after her husband, tried to cheer her up with homely comfort. Gertrude did not dare to tell how it was with her; it would have pained her mother, who loved the hard, harsh, griping Simon Morley with all her heart, because he was her husband. It is painful to find how little our dearest friends know about us, even though we may have lived, as we imagine, transparently before them.

"So near, and yet so far!"

“Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?” is a question that rises frequently and mournfully upon us all.

Mrs Morley hoped that she was now at last going to live happily and comfortably with Gertrude; but, poor woman, the early mistake she had made in Gertrude’s training had done its irrevocable work, making them totally unsuitable as companions. Gertrude had never been knitted in the bonds of home, and there was a certain constraint and strangeness she could never overcome. This was increased by the constant sense of the sin she had committed against her parents; the very anxiety to atone for it gave her a sense of consciousness and effort; whilst poor Mrs Morley was so afraid Gertrude would be annoyed at different things, or, as she phrased it, “lest she should not be content,” that the poor woman was nearly worn to a nervous fever.

As to Simon Morley, his ebullition of

paternal hospitality subsided soon to low-water mark. He felt the injustice of having to support another man's family, and though he could not call it a hardship, yet he gave grudgingly.

He never showed any affection for his little grandchild, but as she went trotting about the room, he would take his pipe from his lips and remark cynically, "that she would soon be old enough to go out to service."

One day when she was sitting on her stool absorbed in the pictures of "Dr Watts's Hymns," which Mrs Morley had bought for sixpence from a pedlar, he reached across, and taking it out of her hand, flung it into the fire, saying, "she should not be brought up to be bookish and fantastical; one of that sort in a family was enough."

Miss Clarissa set up a fit of crying, and went into a violent passion on the loss of her book, whereupon Simon Morley's temper and patience both gave way;—he laid the

child across his knee and whipped her severely, saying, as he set her down, "that if she did not leave off crying, he would fling her out of the window."

Mrs Morley and Gertrude were both present during this exercise of arbitrary power.

"I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself to treat a baby like that so cruelly," said Mrs Morley, indignantly.

"You want to make a fool of the child as you did of the mother, but I will see better than that"—and he knocked the ashes out of his pipe with a violence that broke it—then, rising, he put on a broad-brimmed hat, and went out into the yard to see the horses stabled after they came in from the fields.

Gertrude had not said one word, only she turned very pale and sick—not for the bodily pain which she saw inflicted, but for the bitter lesson of harshness and injustice, which was enough to poison the whole childhood at its well-spring. She did not speak one

word. When her father left the room her mother took up the child, and tried to comfort her with candy and kisses.

When Simon Morley returned the child was in bed.

That very night Gertrude took her resolution. She wrote a letter to Lady Southend, reminding her of her promise to give her work, and claiming it. She briefly related what had befallen her, and what she had been doing, and expressed her willingness to do anything—so that she might be able to support herself and her child. After writing this letter, she felt more calm—the result did not remain with her.

The next day Simon Morley's savage temper was in some measure accounted for;—he was laid up with a violent fit of the gout, which at one time threatened to fly to his stomach, poor Mrs Morley and all the household were kept in great trouble and anxiety.

Gertrude proved herself a most efficient nurse, and was not only a great comfort to

her mother—saving her much fatigue, and cheering her up—but was so gentle and patient, or as her father expressed it, “so handy,” that even old Simon Morley’s heart softened towards his daughter as it had never done before; so that when he got about again her position was much more pleasant—she took her place as the daughter of the house, and she ceased to feel herself an intruder. Still, the consciousness that she had determined to earn her own living, without depending on any one, was the great ingredient that made her life more comfortable.

During the month that Simon Morley was confined to the house, Gertrude had no leisure to think or wonder about the result of her application to Lady Southend; but when it came to six weeks she grew anxious, and feared either that the old lady was dead, or had gone abroad, or that her letter had miscarried.

However, just as she had made up her



mind to write once more, her father one morning came in with a handsome-looking letter which he had taken himself from the postman; it was sealed with a coronet, and franked by Lord Metringham himself. Simon Morley was not insensible to a certain pleasure in seeing the letter addressed—

“To the care of Mr Simon Morley,

“The Cottage, Saltfield.”

It showed, he thought, that his old landlord had not forgotten him, and must have spoken about him—a microscopic point of gratified vanity: to Simon Morley Lord Metringham was not an ordinary mortal, but had an emphasis appertaining to no other member of the peerage.

“Well, lass,” said he, loitering near her; “what great folks have been writing to thee now, to upset thee just as we were beginning to be comfortable? It is not from his lordship himself, is it?”

“No,” said Gertrude, glancing over the paper; “it comes from old Lady Southend, who used to be very kind to me in London.”

"Well, let us hear what she says. I want to hear how grand folks write."

This was a somewhat embarrassing request, as Gertrude had not told even her mother of her application for work. Luckily at that instant Bill Stringer, Simon Morley's factotum, appeared in the distance; he had come to receive orders touching the killing of a pig. Simon Morley, on seeing him, hobbled out of the room—he was still somewhat lame from his gout—saying,

"Well, thou canst tell me about it at dinner-time."

Left alone, Gertrude began to read her letter; it was very short, but full of real practical kindness. Lady Southend explained her delay by telling Gertrude that she was abroad when she received the letter, and had only just returned. She desired Gertrude would come up to town at once. She had taken lodgings for her, of which she had paid the first quarter in advance; and pro-

mitted to find her as much employment as she could undertake. A banknote of a sufficient amount to cover her expenses was enclosed in the letter.

Gertrude's first emotion was one of intense gratitude for the door of escape now opened to her—she knelt down and thanked God, and prayed to be kept from all evil.

She feared opposition from her parents, and she could not regard with composure the possibility of failure.

With her mother she had to combat long and painfully.

"It was unnatural," the good woman said, "to go out to earn money, when her husband ought to send her half his salary."

Gertrude ceased to argue, and only said,—

"Mother, let me go; it will be better for me."

Simon Morley took a far more practical view of the matter—but, if the truth must be told, a line and a half in the letter about

Lord Mettingham, and the respect he had for her parents, was the touch that sent him entirely over to Lady Southend's opinion.

Notwithstanding Gertrude's improvement in his eyes, he was glad that he had not the prospect of keeping her with him for an unlimited time. He graciously told her, however, that if the scheme did not answer, she was at liberty to come back—and that she had better leave the child with them until she was settled.

But to this Gertrude would by no means consent. A portion of the elasticity of her youth had returned to her, and the first easing of the millstone of dependence which her own actions had tied round her neck was far too delightful to leave a knot untied. She thanked her father gratefully—comforted her mother as well as she could—and was ready in three days to take her departure.

The day of departure came. Gertrude was nervously afraid that something would occur to prevent it. Poor Mrs Morley did not

cry, but she felt bitterly that she could not make Gertrude happy at home—that she always wanted to leave her; and though, mother-like, she took all the blame to herself, still she had a confused feeling that Gertrude did not love her. She always thought of Gertrude as her daughter, and forgot that, when she married, this relationship was changed for ever. Whilst Augustus was away, she had hoped she should have her daughter all to herself. And now that she and her father were reconciled, she could not or would not understand why Gertrude should want to leave her again, to go and live among strangers and work for her bread. She knew her husband was rich, for she had helped him to make his money, and it seemed so unjust that he should allow one of his own children to want. All her sorrows settled into an aching dull pain of heart, which she took with dumb patience, without trying to understand.

As to Simon Morley, he became fonder of Gertrude in proportion to the nearness of her departure; he saw to the cording of the trunks, despatched them in a cart under Bill Stringer to meet the stage-coach, and actually gave her twenty guineas to begin the world with ! This generosity was Simon's equivalent to the paternal blessing ; he did not understand it in any other form.

Mrs Morley had packed a large hamper with provisions, enough to last for a month.

The yellow gig was at the door.

"Come, Gertrude ; now, then, are you ready?—you women have always so many last words. Come, missis, don't hinder her, or we shall miss the coach."

"There, Gertrude, you must go now, your father won't wait. I am sure I don't know why you are going, when we might have been so comfortable, but it is too late to talk of that now. Be sure you write and tell me when you want anything, and write often ;

it costs you no trouble, and your father will not grudge the postage."

Gertrude's heart swelled with remorse ; it seemed to her as though she had been born only to make her mother unhappy.

Clarissa was already in the gig, engrossed with a small covered basket from which issued the plaintive mewings of a young kitten which had been kidnapped from all the joys of kitten life and the purrings of its mother, and was not yet reconciled to its lot.

They were in ample time for the coach, and had to wait some minutes before it came up.

"This is as it should be—I like always to be before the time. Now, Gertrude, be frugal and be industrious, and there is no fear but you will do well. Above all do not be giddy, and keep all young fellows at a distance ; recollect a woman whose husband is away is easily talked about—so don't lay yourself open to observation ; young females

cannot be too guarded in their manners. Above all don't let any young sprigs of quality come about thee—they are a good-for-nothing set."

Simon Morley's admonitions were brought to a close by the arrival of the 'Dart,' and the need to see after the luggage.

It was a lovely summer morning, and Gertrude asked Fat Sam if he would let her and the little girl ride beside him for a stage. Of course Sam was only too glad and too proud to comply—so, first, the kitten in its basket was hoisted up, then Miss Clarissa, and lastly Gertrude climbed up with very little assistance. Simon Morley was pleased, he thought it looked like thrift; but Gertrude had only thought it much pleasanter than being stifled up inside.

"Well, good bye, Ger.; write a line to tell us how you get there. Sam can bring it, and it will save postage. Take care of yourself, and hold fast; the child will fall foremost if you don't hold her."



With these parting words Simon Morley turned his gig on one side. Fat Sam cracked his whip and the horses darted off with a bound; they were all very fresh, and did not like to be kept so long standing.

No mode of travelling will ever again be half so pleasant as the "box seat" beside a first-class coachman of the old times.

Sam proved himself worthy of the honour which as he conceived had been paid him. During the two stages she rode beside him, Gertrude heard the history of every gentleman's family whose seat they passed, and traditions of their fathers and grandfathers besides; interspersed with the original observations of Sam himself, which served to show the curious social perspective in which great folks are seen by those so much below them that they scarcely recognise their existence. To them, the 'Dart' was a stage-coach, and the coachman driving it had no separate identity. Here was that "coachman" amusing Gertrude with narratives of their debts, their

doings, their domestic life, their bettings on the turf, and speaking quite freely of family circumstances which they fondly believed to be buried in the bosom of the family; and Gertrude, whom they never had seen and never were likely to see, was aware of secrets they would not have trusted to their best friends.

It is quite startling to reflect how many social secrets come to our knowledge about persons who do not know us in the least, and we sometimes chance to see those individuals walking about quite unconscious of the bombshell we could explode in their ears, by the shortest whisper! There is an immense quantity of gossip in the world, and much ill-nature; nevertheless, a great deal of "perilous stuff" is kept safely buried in the bosoms that received it.

"You see, Mrs Donnelly," said Sam, "going this road up and down every day, I see a power of people, and hear a deal one way or other; they may none of them tell much,

but they all talk some, and I have to listen to a deal of stuff. I don't talk free to everybody as I do to you, for it would do a deal of mischief; but to you I don't mind, for you are a real lady in all your ways. I am only sorry you could not make yourself happy at home. Madam Morley will be sadly off without you. Ah! there are few women like her! I recollect her long before you were born; afore Simon Morley came a-courting to her. I was a slim young man in those days; she was the first trouble I ever had. I never felt so bad as I did when I seed she began to take up with your father; of course she had a right to please herself. And what a wife she made him! Bless you, she made that house! I have seen her many's the time sitting at that little table smoothing out the bank-notes and rolling them round her wrist. If she had taken me instead of Simon, maybe she would not have been so rich; but she should have had her own way, I would

never have said she did wrong, and then I should not have been driving you here to-day maybe!"

"Well, Sam," said Gertrude, "seeing that I am here, you have made my journey very pleasant—you must come to see me as often as you can in London, it will be a comfort to my mother to hear about me—but at the end of this stage we had better get inside, Clarissa is growing sleepy. At what time do you think we shall get in to-night?"

"Well, I mostly reach there about six o'clock; it may be half an hour sooner or later—but they look for me about six."

It was, as Sam said, about six o'clock when the 'Dart' drove in to the old-fashioned yard of the 'Swan with Two Necks,' with its quaint galleries rambling round the house, and the wooden carved balustrades—picturesque, clumsy, and taking up more room than can be spared in these days.

A respectable servant out of livery was waiting with a hackney-coach. He touched

his hat to Gertrude, and handed her a little note from Lady Southend. It was very short, merely to say that she had sent her own servant, who was to see her safe to the lodgings she had engaged.

Sam, who had set his heart upon doing this very thing, felt aggrieved ; he assisted the civil servant with a very surly air, and pretended to be engaged with the ostler when Gertrude was ready to get into the coach. But Gertrude ran up to him, and asked him as a great favour to step down to see her that evening,—and she gave him Lady Southend's note, that he might have the address.

Of course Sam allowed himself to promise, and then by a natural change of feeling began to be proud that her ladyship had sent her own servant to wait upon Mrs Donnelly.

The hackney-coach drove to a quiet out-of-the-way street in the neighbourhood of Gray's Inn.

The houses were large, and had once been of some pretensions, though they now looked dingy enough. It was not a thoroughfare, but seemed to be the heart of a labyrinth of outer streets, so still and quiet; the grass grew amid the stones that paved it, and several fine trees, in the bright luxuriance of green leaves, seemed to be quite unconscious that they were thriving in the midst of a crowded quarter of a great city. The hackney-coach stopped before a house where evidently some pains had been bestowed to brighten it up. Plants in flower stood in some of the windows and a canary in a fine gilt cage was hanging outside singing to the full extent of its little throat. The steps, though somewhat broken, were dazzlingly white, and the brass knocker was bright and shining.

A respectable elderly woman came to the door; she received Gertrude with an air of quiet propriety which spoke her to be a person who had been trained in good service.

Gertrude was taken at once to the second story, graced by the flower-pots and canary.

"These are your rooms, ma'am," said the woman; "my lady sent furniture herself to make them more complete than was in my power. I hope they will please you."

There was a spacious landing-place. The shallow uncarpeted stairs were of oak, and the balusters, black with age, were quaintly carved and twisted. A large old-fashioned sitting-room, with a bed-room opening from it, and a smaller room beyond, were Gertrude's rooms.

A large stuffed arm-chair, covered with old Indian chintz, was placed beside the window; a table, set with tea things and all the requisites for a substantial tea, was before it; the grate was filled with a pot of common, but sweet smelling flowers. The first aspect of the room was singularly pleasant and homely—something like an old Dutch interior.

The civil man servant and the hackney-coachman brought up the luggage between them, and when Gertrude took out her purse

to pay the fare, the man said that "my lady had settled everything."

"Now, ma'am," said the landlady, "if you will be led by me, you will have your tea and let me help you to put little missy to bed, for she looks dead tired, poor lamb ! Your tea is made ; I took the liberty of making it down stairs. I shall only be in the next room, if you will call me when you want me."

Good Mrs Hutchins bustled out of the room, and Gertrude, with her heart full of thankfulness, sat down to her first meal which was not provided with the "bitter bread" she had eaten for so long.



## CHAPTER XV.

GERTRUDE rose early the next morning, whilst Clarissa still slept. Sam had been prevented coming the evening before, but he had sent word by a special stable-boy that he would be with her by eight o'clock in the morning, if that would not be too early. She had much business on her hands.

She first unpacked her effects and arranged her rooms, for she wished Sam to take a good report to her mother. When she had finished, they wore an air of quaint

homeliness, and were more to her taste than any rooms she had ever lived in.

Over the carved wooden mantel-piece was a picture of Mrs George Anne Bellamy, in the "Grecian Daughter"—and on the walls hung sundry prints illustrating scenes from *Clarissa Harlowe* and *Sir Charles Grandison*. There was on one side of the room a large square comfortable sofa, stuffed with feathers, and amply supplied with pillows; but Gertrude belonged to the old-fashioned school, which held that young women ought to sit straight upright upon hard chairs with their feet firmly planted upon the ground in the first position, and allowed of no undignified rest or lounging attitudes, however graceful. A large table, and four heavy high-backed mahogany chairs with broad horse-hair seats, completed the furniture.

In her letter to her mother she said all she could think of to re-assure and comfort her as to her prospects.

She then dressed *Clarissa*, and had scarcely

concluded when the steps of Sam were heard upon the stairs.

He came in mopping his shining head, and somewhat out of breath.

"You live pretty high up, miss; but you are a lighter weight than I am. I hope you did not take it ill in regard that I did not come last night. You see there was a meeting of the coach proprietors, and they would have me to attend—it was not over till latish, and we did a deal of talking, so I did not feel rightly in a state to come to see you."

"No, Sam, I did not take it at all amiss, and you see us to much more advantage this morning. But has not all your talking last night made you feel inclined for some tea and toast this morning?" said Gertrude, smiling.

"Well, yes, I can't say but what it has," replied Sam, with some consciousness; "you see there was a deal of smoke too, so many pipes going at once—till we could not see

each other; but I would rather be with you, and little miss here, any day."

"Well Sam, the oftener you come to see us the kinder I shall take it. You must be sure and tell my mother how comfortable you have left us."

"Well, yes—I can't say but what you *are* comfortable enough to look at; but I don't like the thought of your living by yourself—but it won't be for always, I hope; your husband will be coming back again.

"That is the picture of a pretty woman up there—but hard to hold in hand I should think. Who may she be?"

"That is Mrs Bellamy, who was a celebrated actress, and a very beautiful woman."

"Ah, well! I have no great opinion of play-acting, and I think no woman ought to be let to do it. But now, if your letter is ready, I must be going; I will run down and see your mother on Sunday, it will be a satisfaction to her like."

Sam looked round the room, to take stock of what there was to be seen. \_\_\_\_\_

"I suppose I may tell the old cat that her kitten is quite well, and takes kindly to the change. You will have to look sharp after your bird, when she grows a little bigger."

"Good bye, Sam—come again soon."

"Good bye, miss, and thank you kindly."

Sam departed, and Gertrude felt that she now stood in the world alone.

In the afternoon she took Clarissa and went to see Lady Southend.

She was shown into the room she well remembered that Christmas morning years before. The old lady sat in the same chair, and might have been sitting there ever since for any change that appeared in her.

She received Gertrude very kindly, and gave her a kiss, saying—

"Well, here you are at last! I have

been looking for you all day. I suppose you were tired after your journey. Now, see, I have been as good as my word, and looked out some work for you. ... But how do you like your rooms in the first place?"

"They are charming," replied Gertrude; "I feel quite settled in them already."

"Mrs Hutchins, your landlady, was once my maid, but she would insist upon getting married, and has done no good for herself ever since; however, her husband is dead now, and she will be more comfortable. It is very seldom that troublesome people die out of the way, so I consider her very lucky;—he may perhaps do more good in the next world than he did in this, but I doubt it. I once knew a curious accident happen very conveniently. A man I knew, a thoroughly worthless fellow, who had been the plague and scandal of all his friends, was despatched to travel. He went to Spain, and arrived at Madrid

whilst one of their revolutions was going on;—instead of stopping in the hotel, he went out to see what was the matter; a cannon was fired just as he turned the corner of a street, and he was killed. He was the only individual killed in the affair, and he was precisely the man the world could best spare, for nobody wanted him here.”

Gertrude made no reply to this anecdote, and Lady Southend, thinking it might perhaps come too closely home to her, changed the subject.

“You see that pile of black satin? I want to cover a screen with it for a present to Southend and his wife when they return to England. You did not know he was married?”

“No,” replied Gertrude; “I never heard of it. I hope you will have comfort in the marriage.”

“Oh, as for that, I expect nothing. I dare say we shall get on very well.

It is a highly suitable match as regards family; for the rest, she is like other young women—and very glad to be a Countess. But, see, you are to embroider that satin with flowers in natural colours. I have bought some patterns, but they are very stiff and ugly—still the best I could find.”

Gertrude looked at them in silence for a few moments, and then said,—

“ I think I could improve upon them. I used to draw and group flower-pieces when I was at school with Miss Le French; I am greatly out of practice—but I think it would come back to me. These are very insipid. I should like to try if I cannot make out something better if I may.”

“ To be sure, child. I am glad you have the notion. If you can design your own patterns, your work will be worth a great deal more than it would otherwise; try to-night, and come again to-morrow, that I may see what you can do. You must have a glass of wine after your walk, and if it should



rain to-morrow remember you are not to come. You must take care of your health, for the sake of your child."

When Gertrude rose to go away, the old lady gave Clarissa a little white satin needle-book, embroidered with beads, and told her she must learn to sew betimes to help her mother.

Gertrude sat up till late, trying to draw designs for the six leaves of the folding screen. It was not easy, and she went to bed without having succeeded to her satisfaction.

The next day was wet. She worked hard, and by evening had produced three designs; one centre piece of a Dresden china sort of hay-maker, resting under a tree, and two beautiful groups of flowers. The colours were of course only roughly laid in; but there was quite enough to show the intention and to guide her work.

When Lady Southend saw them she was delighted.

"Come, my dear, that will do famously!

I see you can work well—and good work, of whatever kind, will always fetch its price. When people have to pay money for anything, they require to have it well done. Oh dear ! if you knew all the trouble I have had with young women who have professed to want work—some in the teaching line, and some in the sewing line, and most of them so miserably inefficient—you would pity me ! The fact was, they all needed money, but they did *not* want to work ; and being ladies—daughters of officers, orphans of clergymen, or perhaps widows of poor gentlemen—they all considered that the element of charity ought to come largely into the business. They brought their susceptibilities, their recollections of the times ‘ when they never expected to have to work for their living ;’ or the thought of what some dear departed relative, who in this life used to ride in a coach and six, would have said or thought, ‘ if he could have seen them.’ Some would be so provokingly meek-spirited and tearful, that I could have found in my

heart to beat them—others would be haughty, and show their spirit on all occasions, whilst the work of one and all was generally so ill done that the money was anything but earned. My dear! my dear! so many virtues are required even to sew up a seam well. Take my advice, and teach Clarissa to use her fingers, and bring her up to work for her living. Do not let her have the notion of trying to climb above her present station. If promotion is in store for her, it will come without seeking.”

“Indeed that is what I mean to do,” said Gertrude. “I have suffered too much—not more, however, than I deserved—but I would wish that the consequences of my own error may end with me, and not be continued through the life of my child; that is all I pray for now. I cannot tell you the peace of mind I have had since I came to London. You would feel that your kindness had not been thrown away if you only knew the deliverance it has been to me, and the hope you have given me of being able to bring up

Clarissa as I feel she ought to be brought up. If to be glad of a blessing is to be grateful, I am sure I am grateful."

"Yes, I really think you are," said the old lady, smiling, whilst the tears coursed each other down the cheeks of Gertrude ; "but come, do not cry, it will make your eyes weak, and you will need them.

"Do you know," she continued—to give Gertrude time to recover her composure—"I often wish some good angels would take the guise of servants-of-all-work, just to set an example, and show how the thing ought to be done. If I were the Pope, I would canonize some good servant, for an encouragement to the rest—and she should be canonized for her good service, not for nonsensical austerities and fantastic superfluities—but for faithfully and humbly doing the duties of a lowly calling. My ideal of a maid-of-all-work would be really something noble and attractive. Some one who had known her was telling me, the other day, that Joanna

Southcote was a first-rate maid-of-all-work before she took to seeing visions and dreaming dreams. It was quite a new view of her character to me—I only wish it had been the end instead of the beginning.”

“ Well, dear Lady Southend,” said Gertrude, rising, “ I hope I shall succeed so as to satisfy you—good intentions are not of much value unless they succeed.”

“ True, child ; the success of bringing our work to a good end is the most satisfactory of all mortal things—it is about the only one that does not ‘ perish in the using.’ But I shall send for a coach, you cannot carry all that satin through the streets—to such a distance. I wish you lived nearer on some accounts, but I wished you to be with that good woman—both for her sake and your own—she is as true as steel.”

“ The coach, my lady,” said the polite servant who had met Gertrude on her arrival.

“ Well, I am sorry for it, I would like to

have kept you longer; we must have a talk together again soon. I will send for you—but get on with the work, I am impatient to see how it will look.”

At first Gertrude’s progress was not rapid; she was out of practice, and she was nervously anxious about satisfying Lady Southend, who was by no means remarkable for her patience or her suavity. To Gertrude, at any rate, she did not show herself a hard task-mistress, but was extremely kind and considerate in all ways. She really liked Gertrude, and she unconsciously flattered herself that Gertrude’s efficiency, diligence, and good sense were the practical results of the many long conversations in which she indulged herself with her. Everything in the world may be used up with advantage in some conjuncture or other, Mrs Donnelly’s domestic discipline had pounded everything like conceit or self-assertion out of Gertrude—which was partly the cause why the old lady found that she was not the

bore that all her other protégées had been more or less.

Gertrude's life now flowed on pleasantly ; she had to work hard, but that she did cheerfully.

Little Clarissa improved every day ; if she did not make any wonderful progress in book learning, she gained what was far more valuable, the training that only a mother can give. She was a child of quick sensibility and a violent temper—generous and affectionate, but wilful and wayward to a degree that needed constant care and great judgment ; happy for her that she met with it, —so many need it who are left to be broken in or broken to pieces, as the case may be, by the rough teaching of the consequences of their sins of ignorance !

Sam frequently came to see them. He never came without bringing some child's treasure for Clarissa—he must have spent a little fortune upon her. It was a new object in his life. One day he brought a doll's

kitchen, that queen of play-things ! What child does not recollect the intense delight of possessing a doll's-house for the first time, with its kettles and frying-pans, and chairs and tables ? In Clarissa's days dolls did not reside in the magnificent Belgravian mansions that are manufactured for them now ; they had seldom anything more than a Dutch kitchen—but the delight of possessing it !

Gertrude always had a clean pipe and a paper of tobacco ready for Sam when he came, who at first expressed many scruples, but in the end took to smoking his pipe beside the fire as naturally as if he had lived there all his life.

Through the introduction of Lady South-end, Gertrude obtained as much work as she could execute. It became a point of fashion for ladies to have their Court trains embroidered by Mrs Donnelly—or after Mrs Donnelly's design. She might have employed workwomen under her, but it would have changed the whole aspect of her life ; she



could earn enough to live very comfortably in her original rooms, and to lay by a little besides.

Her designs for embroidery, both in satin, lace, and muslin, were in great request, and gradually it became her chief employment. She would have been quite happy, but, like other people, she had a skeleton in her cupboard—the dread of her husband's return.

She sometimes dreamed that he had come back a shipwrecked mariner, and that he was extremely angry when he found her working, and that he flung a fine Court train into the fire, where it was entirely consumed! She awoke with the fright. All the speeches and actions she attributed to him were extremely like things that had really happened; but with the fantastic, exaggerated resemblance that the objects on the slides of a magic-lantern bear to the realities. Mr Augustus, worthless as he was, had never been so bad as her fancy painted him.

Her imagination had grown quite morbid as regarded him, and she was haunted by the fear that he would come back suddenly.

This was bad, and not at all like a model wife; but what was worse, it indicated cowardice, a failing in the plain duty of her position. When people live in dread that some coming duty will break up a pleasant course of things, they may be quite sure that trouble is in store for them.

One day Gertrude received a ship-letter from Africa, which had been re-directed and forwarded by her father. It had gone first to The Cottage, was greasy and dirty, and smelt villanously of the strange places it had passed through before it had reached her.

Communication in those days was not either frequent or regular; it depended on chance ships, and a still more uncertain delivery.

This letter had been sent by a slave-vessel, and had made a considerable circuit; it had been nearly twelve months in coming.

She opened it with a sickening dread and disgust; the contents did not re-assure her. Mr Augustus did not like his quarters or his duties, though, to do him justice, he discharged as few of those as possible, and he expressed his intention of coming home by the first ship, "as he felt convinced that his health would never stand the climate."

That very night—Clarissa was in bed—Gertrude was sitting up rather late to finish some work she had in hand—a hackney-coach stopped at the door, a loud voice was heard asking if Mrs Donnelly lived there, a stamping of feet followed, and the noise of a heavy chest dragged painfully up-stairs; the door of the sitting-room was opened, and Mr Augustus, bronzed and coarse-looking, with a beard that had not grown beyond the stage of ugliness, with his clothes dirty and untidy, took his wife into his arms with a violence that seemed intended to break her bones, and giving her a hug, said,—

"Well, my girl, you see I am come

back ! But pay the coach, for I have not a farthing."

He flung himself into the chair she had been occupying, shoved her work on one side to make room for his elbow, and the cheerful little room was filled with an uncomfortable presence.

Her dream of the shipwrecked mariner had come to pass !

## CHAPTER XVI.

POOR Gertrude ! She cleared away her work, laid the table for supper, went to prepare a bed-room for him, and, by busying herself about his material comforts, she evaded the necessity of appearing much rejoiced at his unexpected arrival.

When she returned he asked for Clarissa. Gertrude went and fetched her. The child, awakened from a profound sleep, did not evince any other emotion than extreme repugnance to being taken out of her comfortable bed, to be dazzled with the lights,

and roughly kissed by a rough-looking man with a painfully sharp beard. She began to cry.

"Is that all you have taught her?" said Mr Augustus, as he gave her back to Gertrude.

"What would you have? The poor child is only half awake; she will be a different creature when you see her to-morrow."

"I hope so, or we shall be apt to quarrel. You are as queer as you can be yourself. A pretty reception for a man to come home to, all the way from Africa!"

Gertrude did not reply; and luckily, just then, Mrs Hutchins herself came in with the savoury steak she had cooked for his supper. She looked so pleasant and smiling, and the steak looked so tempting, that the discontent of Mr Augustus was mollified, and by the time he had finished his supper he was almost amiable.

"How did you discover where I was living?" asked Gertrude.

"Oh! I arrived a week ago at Bristol, and wrote down to The Cottage where I left you. I got this bit of a note in answer."

He handed Gertrude a crumpled letter in her father's crabbed handwriting:

"Sir,—Mrs Donnelly, your wife, does not reside here. You will find her at 14 ——— Place, near Gray's-inn Lane.

"Your obedient,

"S. MORLEY."

"I only received a letter from you this morning," said Gertrude.

"Aye, indeed! let me see it."

Gertrude gave it to him. He turned it over, and said—

"How curious! I wrote that letter, and changed my mind about sending it. I suppose they must have found it amongst my papers after I had left, and sent it to you. I have had a precious deal of knocking about in the world since I wrote that."

The fact was that there hung a cloud of impenetrable obscurity over the fortunes of

Mr Augustus since he left England. He told his wife a rambling story about a Portuguese Jew—about some trading speculations in which he had engaged, and which turned out ill; what they actually were he avoided stating. He talked wildly and vaguely about his great expectations and his enemies, who had endeavoured to ruin him—but about Sir Simon and his secretaryship he never spoke. There was a tone of coarse reckless boasting and bravado in his manner of speaking that struck Gertrude painfully; it was something she had never remarked in him before; he had, moreover, a look of dissipation and general disreputableness.

He continued his rambling talk far on into the night; he asked Gertrude very few questions about herself—indeed he did not seem to care much about what she had been doing. He had decidedly fallen to a lower moral level than he had been at before he left England.

At last Gertrude said,—



"I am sure you must be tired, Augustus; will you not go to bed?"

"Well, I don't mind. I shall not get up very early in the morning; on shipboard we were not tied to times, we went to bed when we liked, night or day, and we got up when we liked. I scarcely knew the difference between night and day. Well, good night; it seems a long time since I said that to you before."

Gertrude was once more alone, but how completely had the last few hours changed the aspect of her life. She felt disgust and annoyance and impatience—not the least inclination to take up the duty that had fallen before her. She was angry; it seemed to her more than she could bear. With something like a shudder she began to reduce the disordered room into an approach towards its ordinary neatness. She opened the window; the cool night breeze, the quiet moonlight and twinkling stars, seemed to purify the room from the atmosphere of her husband.

She then undressed, and after combing and arranging the bright tresses of her long hair, she bathed her face and hands with rose water. She felt as if she had contracted an involuntary stain by coming into contact with the kind of man that Augustus had become. A sense of outrage and degradation pursued her even in sleep. She awoke the next morning with a heavy weight of oppression at her heart of which she was sensible before she could recollect what had befallen her.

Clarissa said,—

“ I hope papa is gone away, her will make us so uncomfortable. I cannot bear to see that great trunk; it takes up all the room.”

Gertrude was startled to hear her own feelings expressed by the child, and the extreme impropriety of allowing her to speak without restraint on such a delicate matter struck her; still her own heart was in such a state of rebellion against the Providence that had brought back her husband, that she could

not at once set herself to bring Clarissa into a more filial state of mind.

As she continued for some little time unchecked, Miss Clarissa's tongue went faster, and her expressions of displeasure became stronger in proportion as she fancied herself listened to. At length Gertrude said, gravely,—

“ My little girl must not speak in that way of her papa. He has been travelling great distances in dangerous countries to earn some money to bring home to us, but, instead of that, he is come home very poor; so Clarissa must be good and kind to him, and be very obedient, and try to find out what she should do to please him.”

“ Well, mamma,” replied the young lady in a somewhat more subdued key, and with a confidential air such as precocious little misses of tender years sometimes assume; “ but you must own that it is very disagreeable to have all our pleasant days interrupted.”

“ Does Clarissa recollect of Whom it was said, ‘ that He pleased not Himself ? ’ and

you know that we are commanded to follow His example."

But Gertrude's words seemed to mock her own ears, she was so far from feeling their import.

She and Clarissa had their breakfast together as usual, and after breakfast Gertrude opened the sea-chest that, as Clarissa had said, filled up the whole landing-place. She found it nearly empty, and what clothes it contained were mostly soiled.

Her first act was to make up all the clothes into a bundle for the washerwoman, and then to prevail on Mrs Hutchins to help her to carry the chest itself bodily into the cellar.

After this, she put on her bonnet and went to a ready-made linen warehouse, and purchased a dozen new shirts and two complete sets of under-clothing. This first small instalment towards reducing things to something like order and comfort soothed her feelings.

Augustus had given no signs of awaking, although it was now eleven o'clock. She made some coffee, and determined to take it to him in his room. Her heart sank at the prospect of having her days cut up by irregular meals and having to prepare extra ones at all hours. What was to become of her work she thought, and what was to become of her!

Mr Augustus looked if possible rather more ugly in the morning light than he had done the evening before;—it was not so much the ugliness of feature as the ugliness of the man's own nature beneath.

"I hope you are rested this morning,—I have brought you some breakfast," said Gertrude.

"It is a pity you troubled yourself—I could have had it when I got up; what o'clock is it?"

"It is past eleven—I will bring you some hot water directly."

Gertrude's coffee was first-rate, and Mr

Augustus felt himself the better for it. He graciously expressed his intention "to get up," and when his wife had brought him the plentiful means for a thorough ablution—had laid out his razors and his fresh clothes—the air of comfort and orderliness to which he had been so long unaccustomed began to exercise a pleasant influence.

"I see you intend me to cast my travelling skin, and to come out a dandy," said he in a tone of content. "I dare say I shall feel all the better for a fresh rigging out; but in old Calabar, where I was so long, such articles as these belonged to another world altogether. Now, if you will leave me, I will get myself washed and dressed."

The improvement in his appearance was great. When he entered the sitting-room it would have been difficult to recognise him for the same man who had sat over the fire the previous evening. He had shaved his beard, trimmed his whiskers, and altogether

looked more like the Augustus Donnelly of former times.

Clarissa no longer shrank from him; they soon became friends. She brought him her doll's kitchen, and showed him all her treasures. He played with her and told her stories, and felt highly complacent at his own success. Clarissa was a very pretty child, and her father was proud of her.

At length he said he would take her out for a walk. Gertrude hesitated—she did not like to trust him; and that of course made him more set upon it.

“She is not strong, Augustus; do not let her walk far.”

“Never fear, she and I will take excellent care of ourselves. We will go into the Park to see the fine folks.”

It was a lovely day at the latter end of May. Gertrude could not find in her heart to refuse, and prepared Clarissa for her walk. Augustus did not invite his wife; it never occurred to him to do so.

"You may as well give me some money, Ger.; it is awkward to be with empty pockets."

Gertrude gave him a pretty netted purse, tolerably well filled with silver.

"I shall call at a tailor's and order myself some fresh clothes. I cannot go amongst people until I am a little better dressed."

Gertrude repeated her caution against allowing Clarissa to walk too far, and they departed. Clarissa looked up and smiled as they passed the window.

"I wish poor mamma had been going with us, instead of stopping at home to work."

"She seems to like it," replied Mr Augustus; "she would have told us if she had wished to come."

As soon as they were fairly off, Gertrude started to go to Lady Southend, to tell her what had happened.

She found the old lady alone, but she was not nearly so sympathising as Gertrude had expected.



“ Well, my dear, it is a great bore, no doubt; but you must just make the best of it. Your husband had an undoubted right to come home, and I advise you not to let him see how much you would have preferred his continued absence. It is only by exercising your influence over him that you will be able to keep things in any sort of order.”

“ Oh, Lady Southend, I am very wicked !” said poor Gertrude; “ but you do not know how dreadful it is to have only one room to eat, and sit and work in, and to have it all disorganised, and everything thrown out of its course. Besides, as he has come back without any money, I do not see how I can supply all his wants, if I have no place to work in. It will never do for me to send home my work smelling of tobacco. If he only would go away again and get something to do.”

“ My dear Gertrude, you are behaving like

a weak and foolish young woman. Your husband is worthless and idle (of course you are indignant to hear him called so, even though it be your own valuation), but he is a long way yet from being a 'bad husband.' I can tell you, from my own experience, what it is to have a 'King Stork.' Ah, my dear! it pleased God to take my husband many years ago, and I hope I have forgiven him as a Christian should. He was what you would have called a 'fine gentleman,' but I tell you that I have worn my diamond bracelets to hide black flesh where he had pinched me. I had a Brussels lace tippet which was the envy of all the women who saw it. I wore it as a fanciful costume, and made it the fashion; everybody copied it, and it was called 'la fichu à la Southend.' As I was never seen without it, people good-naturedly said I wore it morning, noon, and night for the sake of displaying it; they never guessed it was to hide the marks of his

brutality upon my shoulders. One day, whilst my maid was dressing my hair, he came in like a madman, and, seizing the hot irons, scored them across both shoulders; the scars were ineffaceable. I had that morning refused to sign away an estate to pay a gambling debt. Another time he seized me unawares, and cut all the nails on one hand to the quick! —ugh! it makes me shudder to recollect it. He brought his mistresses into the house, and compelled me to receive a woman of quality who audaciously made her appearance wearing ornaments of mine that he had stolen from me to give to her.

“He kept another of his mistresses in a fine house exactly opposite to my back drawing-room windows. I was a great beauty, and had brought him an immense fortune, and I had been desperately in love with him; but I never complained—I never took the world into my confidence. I appeared in public with him, and kept a serene and smiling face whilst he was uttering the most

insulting language in a whisper—looking all the time as polite as if he had been my Lord Chesterfield or Sir Charles Grandison. *You* come and talk to *me* about your husband, after that! Perhaps you will ask me what I gained by putting so good a countenance on the matter. The world could not gossip about me or pity me, and my husband *feared* me when I looked at him and held my tongue. I believe he thought it was a spell by which I could work him evil—his conscience told him what he deserved. I did not gain that strength at once. I began by being eloquent, which only ended in my own discomfiture—and you may be sure that I nearly broke my woman's heart before I could cease to hope that, amid all the wealth of fine qualities with which I had endowed him out of my own beautiful imagination, *some* would at least hold good; but they were all charming illusions, for which I learned to despise myself; and when I once

was able to lay hold upon the truth, I was calm—and at least ceased to wear myself out with vain hopes.

“Go home, child. Lay hold of the fact of things, even though it should be sharper than a sword. Accept your lot as it actually is—do not weakly try to make a compromise if it is miserable; say to yourself, it *is* miserable—and bear it. You will have strength enough to bear whatever trials may come, and to do whatever duty is laid upon you—but your strength will fail if you waste it in struggling to be *happy* into the bargain. Let the comfort you have had in your life since you came to London go, and take up your life as it stands *now*—you will find your account in so doing.

“And now good-bye, and go home. I have told you more of my life than I ever told to anyone before—so keep it to yourself, and profit by it.”

Gertrude felt stronger and braver for the

old lady's words, and she went home determined to go and do likewise.

Mr Augustus and Clarissa had not returned, although the dusk had long been thickening. She kept the tea-table ready, and a bright fire burning, but it was ten o'clock before they came back. Clarissa looked very tired—she was sick, and very cross ; Mr Augustus was in a charmingly pleasant humour, though there was a slight doubleness in his tongue, and a bland confusion in his attempt to give an account of where they had been and what they had done. They had been to Greenwich, and he had seen some of his old friends ; and, apparently, it was a case of “*troppo grazzia*” for their hospitality.

## CHAPTER XVII.

CLARISSA continued ill and feverish all night. She told her mamma that her papa had taken her in a little boat down to Greenwich, where they walked under the beautiful trees in the park, and then he took her to an inn to dine. Some gentlemen came in who knew papa, and they invited them to their table; they were very good-natured to her, and gave her dessert and wine, and talked to her a great deal; and one of the gentlemen took her to a shop, and told her to choose what

she would like best, and she chose that beautiful crystal scent-bottle with a silver top, to give it to her mamma. She thought they would never come home, she grew so tired and sleepy ; at last, after coffee, they came away, and the good-natured gentleman drove her and papa home in his barouche.

Clarissa was several days before she recovered from the ill effects of this journey to Greenwich, which filled Gertrude with much anxiety as to how she should be able to avoid for the future allowing Clarissa to go out with her papa, who was clearly not a person to be trusted with the care of her. But for the present her anxiety was needless.

Mr Augustus, having received a suit of new clothes from the tailor, was scarcely ever at home. He did not tell his wife whither he went, nor how he passed his time ; but he never failed to ask her for money before he went out. He had quite overcome his objection to seeing her " manty-make," or do anything else she pleased to earn money.



He seemed now to accept it as a matter of course that she was to work, and that he was always to obtain money from her for the asking.

This was neither a right nor a wise mode of proceeding ; but Gertrude disliked the sight of him so much, and was so exceedingly thankful to have him out of the house on any terms, that she gave him money from her hoarded store, lest if she should refuse he should sit and lounge over the fire all day.

She accustomed him to have breakfast in his own room—she always prepared it carefully, and took it to him herself. The only time when he decided to breakfast in the sitting-room, where she and Clarissa were at work, either from accident or design the difference in the comfort was so great that he never attempted it again.

We are sorry to confess that she had contracted such an intense disgust and contempt for him, that her sole study was to isolate him, and to have as little of his society as

possible. She never showed any irritation of temper—she never complained or found fault with him; she attended to his comfort—studied his convenience—always spoke gently to him; but there was with all this a smooth marble coldness of manner, an intangible something, that repelled all companionship. She was there as regarded her bodily presence, coldly irreproachable—but she herself was all the while separated and concealed as behind a wall of ice. If Mr Augustus had retained a spark of affection for his wife, he would have suffered much; but as he was quite indifferent, it did not hurt his feelings in the least. Still he was aggravated by the cold, dignified aversion she manifested, which he had sense enough to perceive, although she gave him no excuse for finding fault. His wounded *amour propre* soon converted indifference into a dull smouldering dislike, which grew stronger every day.

The genuine feeling, whatever it may be,

from which our actions spring always makes itself felt, and all that Gertrude gained by her impeccable behaviour was, that her husband never felt the slightest gratitude for anything she did, but had a fixed idea that she was very sorry he had not been devoured or murdered by savages, or come to some fatal end amongst his many adventures, and that she would be very glad if he would once more go away and never come back again; in fact, that she wished him dead on any terms. Mr Augustus, with all his faults, was not a malicious man—on the contrary, he was good-natured. This was fortunate for Gertrude, as he did not give himself the trouble to torment her by the only means in his power—viz., stopping at home. To be sure, it would have been a bore to himself to have done so: he therefore took the less obnoxious course of “scorning to stop where he was not wanted,” took his liberty and all the money she could give him, and con-

sidered that he was to be pitied for having a wife with such a confoundedly bad temper.

Fencing with our duties is like delaying to pay a just debt; we may succeed in evading it for a time, but it will inevitably be exacted in some shape or other, and it will fall all the heavier and at a more inconvenient season than if we had girded up ourselves to meet it bravely at once.

Gertrude felt and knew that, in spite of her unimpeachable virtues, she was not doing her duty honestly and heartily towards her husband.

To make amends she worked harder than ever—stinted herself of food and rest, practised the most rigid self-denying economy—to earn money that her husband squandered, and she hated him more every day he lived. When he left the house she was conscious of a relief that enabled her to breathe, and when she heard his footsteps at night her heart contracted with a sick despair. There is no

hatred like that which comes between a man and wife.

Clarissa meanwhile had grown very fond of her father, and was delighted when he would take her out with him or play with her. But that soon became troublesome to him, and he preferred being independent, for which Gertrude was devoutly thankful. The little Clarissa was the one good element in that home of estrangement and restraint, but she too was a sufferer. Pressed by the necessity of earning money, Gertrude had less time to devote to the training of her child. No one can take anger and uncharitableness to the root of their tree of life with impunity. She had not the same good influence upon Clarissa as formerly.

Undoubtedly Mr Augustus was not the sort of husband to rejoice in, but the greatest source of her unhappiness lay within herself.

One day Mr Augustus came home in high spirits. Lord Elvington had invited

him down to Elvington park to assist him in his electioneering, and he had told him to bring his little friend Clarissa with him.

Gertrude remonstrated, and said, sensibly enough, that Clarissa was too young to visit anywhere without her mother; and pointed out the indelicacy of intruding a child into Lady Elvington's nursery without her invitation, or at least her sanction.

Mr Augustus was proud of Clarissa. He liked the notion of showing her off amongst all the company he expected to meet. He had set his heart upon taking her with him; that it would thwart his wife, was an additional motive why he should insist.

Gertrude ventured to write a note to Lord Elvington, who, although somewhat surprised to find his careless and half-jesting speech taken in earnest, wrote a courteous note in reply, expressing the pleasure it would give himself and Lady Elvington to have such a charming playfellow

for their nursery. There was nothing more to be done except reluctantly to prepare Clarissa's wardrobe for the visit.

Clarissa was half wild at the prospect, which was scarcely shadowed by the necessity of going away from her mother for the first time in her life.

Gertrude had always taken a pride in keeping Clarissa nicely dressed. Her clothes were exquisitely fine and beautifully made, and she thought at least Lady Elvington's nurse would see that the child had been well cared for.

It gave her a pang to see how little Clarissa felt the approaching separation, but she crushed it down into her heart as she had done many other emotions.

A chaise came on the day fixed for their departure, sent by Lord Elvington ; they departed, and Gertrude was left alone with the bitter thoughts that rankled in her heart.

Of course Mr Augustus had ordered

himself a supply of new clothes ; they had come, accompanied by the tailor's bill, which Mr Augustus entirely ignored. Gertrude found it after his departure, lying on the floor of his bedroom torn in two.

The amount was heavy as compared with Gertrude's means of payment, but she took a sullen pleasure in hanging this additional millstone round her neck. She sat in doors all that fine summer weather ; morning, noon, and night, she sat to her task, and resolutely refused to stir abroad. She worked early and late, but it was with a bitter sense of hardship and injustice that injured and wore her strength far more than either the close application or the confinement.

Her health began to suffer, and she fancied that she was sacrificing herself to meet her own difficulties and her husband's debts.

Mrs Hutchins, her kind landlady, grew unhappy about her. She thought she did not eat enough, and often of her own accord brought her little delicacies and nou-



rishing things to tempt her appetite, but Gertrude was in no mood to feel grateful.

“Dear heart, ma’am!” said Mrs Hutchins, seating herself one day, after depositing a delicate sweetbread before Gertrude; “I do wish you would give yourself a holiday—you work too hard—your face is getting a look I don’t like to see. I have had trouble myself, and I know the look of it when I see it in another. If it is only money, I really would not sacrifice my health to obtain it—when health is gone all is gone.”

“Mrs Hutchins, I must earn money for Mr Donnelly and my child;—there is nothing but what I earn.”

Mrs Hutchins looked at Gertrude compassionately and sighed. After a pause, during which anyone who had watched her would have observed a hesitation in her manner as though debating whether she should speak, she said, timidly—

“A clergyman once said to me, that the burdens we bind upon ourselves are heavier

than any that are laid upon us by Providence; —he meant that we make them heavy by our manner of taking them.”

“How do you mean?” said Gertrude, languidly.

“Why, ma’am, he meant that we harden our hearts instead of softening them, and take our troubles perversely and athwart instead of meekly.”

“I don’t know; we can but bear them: they come but to be borne.”

“Nay, ma’am, it makes all the difference to us what way we take our trials. God’s blessing never rested yet on a proud heart, and it makes Him angry when He sends us lessons that we will not learn. It is being stubborn and setting ourselves against Him—and, I take it, that is the one sin which comprehends all others. When I lived with my Lady Southend, she had a great deal of trouble, and she had a brave spirit of her own. I used to wonder where she found all her strength, but I have thought

since that she did not take her trouble just in the right way. She set her face like a flint, and hardened herself like iron, and nobody ever saw her give way; but I have often found her beautiful cambric handkerchiefs gnawed into holes;—she always covered her mouth when my lord angered her.”

“What would you have had her do?” said Gertrude.

“Well, ma’am, I am not just clever at saying things, and you will, maybe, make no sense of me; but when my own troubles came, I did not find that being proud helped me one bit; it only drove the hurt deeper. I was obliged to bear. But, one day, the thought came into my mind how much worse I had all my life behaved towards Him who made me than anybody had ever behaved to me, and how little I deserved that anybody should behave well to me. I began to see myself, and then I left off feeling angry at others; and as soon as the anger was taken away

I felt for all the world as one might do who had had a bad burn dressed with healing ointment. My husband was not a good man,—he was a very bad one in every way. We had one child, and God forgive me if I wrong him, but I surely believe he made away with it for the sake of the club-money. That was a sore grief, and it drove me out of my mind for some months. When I came to myself, I prayed very hard that I might not be let to hate him, and I was not; thank God, I was kept quiet. He fell very ill soon after my judgment had come back to me, and I was able to nurse him, and have a good heart towards him. It was not against me he had sinned, though he had made me suffer.”

“And what became of him,” asked Gertrude.

“He got well again that time, but he went on in bad ways. He left me to go and live with another woman, and I went to

service under my maiden name; my husband joined a gang of burglars, and got shot one night in attempting to enter a gentleman's house. I went to him in the prison."

"Well?" said Gertrude.

"Well, ma'am, he was quite sensible and knew me, and thanked me for coming to see him. He died before his trial came on."

"And were you not very glad?" asked Gertrude, bitterly.

"No, ma'am, I let it be as it best pleased God. I knew His way would be the best."

"But you must have lived in constant dread of him, and of what he might do."

"No, ma'am, I was kept quiet—I was not afraid."

Gertrude looked at the composed, steadfast face of her landlady, and owned in her heart that a more excellent spirit was in her than within herself.

"But what did you do when you found him going so wrong, and when he injured you so deeply?"

"I prayed to God for him, ma'am—that was all I could do; and I was kept to feel quiet myself—through everything."

"But you could not love such a husband, surely?"

"No, ma'am, perhaps not; he had wore that out. But I did not hate him; I wished him well."

"What sort of a man was he in his ways?"

"Well, ma'am, he was very trying. I used to like to have things nice and orderly; and when he was in one of his passions, he thought nothing of smashing everything; he upset my places sadly."

"Mrs Hutchins," said Gertrude, after a pause, "if you will come and take a walk with me, I will go out."

"To be sure, ma'am, I will be glad to do so; and don't sit again so close to your pattern-drawing and embroidery; you take things harder than they are laid upon you."

"I have some work to take home, and if

I am paid I shall have money to pay that tailor's bill, and I shall feel happier when that is off my mind."

When Gertrude came home again, she felt like a sick person who has been sent to breathe a purer atmosphere. When she knelt down that night, the petition that came from the depth of her heart was—"Renew a right spirit within me!"

Before she dropped asleep a verse that she had never much heeded came into her mind—"Above all things, have fervent charity amongst yourselves,"—and for the first time it seemed to have a meaning.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

It was not immediately that Gertrude came to a feeling of charity towards her husband; but the impulse in the right direction had been given—she had at last been awakened to the consciousness of wherein she had been wrong. The “grain of mustard seed” had been sown, and there needed only time to quicken and mature the growth.

She had not, however, any immediate opportunity to test her improvement. The next morning brought her a letter from Mr Augustus, saying that an opportunity had



offered for him to go to Ireland, where he expected to meet with something to his advantage, and that he purposed taking Clarissa along with him "for company, and also to show her to his relations."

This was all the information the letter contained; not one word about Clarissa, no message of love, not even an address to which she might write!

When Mrs Hutchins came in shortly afterwards, she found Gertrude lying upon the floor in a dead faint.

"Dear heart! dear heart! what can have happened to her," and the good woman tried long and unsuccessfully to restore Gertrude to consciousness.

At last she opened her eyes—the letter, lying where it had fallen, was the first thing she saw; a violent shudder passed through her frame, and she became again insensible. Poor Mrs Hutchins was alarmed at this second and prolonged swoon, but at length Gertrude seemed to awaken from

the dead,—she sat upright,—all her faculties and recollections had come back to her.

“Tell me what must I do? what can I do? Read that letter, and tell me.”

“It is a bad job; you can do nothing,—the law gives him the right to take the child anywhere he pleases. It is a pity but what you and he had been more friendly together. I fear he won’t mind for vexing you.”

“No! I have not deserved that he should; but it is too dreadful. He is the last person Clarissa ought to be with,—he is not a fit companion for her. You do not know the people she will be thrown amongst even if the best happens, and he takes her to her grandmother; but I fear he will keep her with him, and she will see and hear nothing but evil continually.”

“It is a hard blow, but you must recollect she is in the hands of God, and He can guard her from all evil there as well as if she were here.”

"If she had only died I could have borne it, but this is worse."

"We must think who sends the trouble—it would be harder still to bear else. But is there nothing to be done?—Maybe, if you were to go down to the place where she has been staying, you might hear something. How do you go there?"

Gertrude eagerly caught at the suggestion. "I will take a chaise and go to-night—at once."

Alas! Gertrude had not the money, and Mrs Hutchins had it not to lend her. Gertrude's thoughts turned to Lady Southend, but her ladyship was out of town. A day's delay might make her too late. The money with which she had bought her husband's absence from home would in this emergency have enabled her to reach her child;—her conscience was not slow to suggest this.

"Suppose I go to make inquiries at a coach-office," said Mrs Hutchins.

"No, no, you shall not. I will go; it

may be that the coach is on the point of starting when I get there—if you went I should miss it.”

“Well, well, I will not hinder you, but I will go with you; and you shall go if you will only eat something first.”

“It would choke me,” said Gertrude, hastily beginning to collect a few necessary articles and put them into a bag. “Now come, I am ready.”

Mrs Hutchins hailed a coach, for Gertrude was unable to walk.

When they arrived at the coach-office, they found that a coach passing the gates of Elvington Park left the office at nine o'clock in the morning and reached there about seven in the evening; it was a long day's journey. Flying would have been all too slow for Gertrude, she wished to set off on foot and to walk all night.

“You would arrive there no sooner, dear; for you would have to wait till the coach overtook you. You must take it as part of the

trial appointed to you, and accept the delay with patience. You will be stronger to-morrow, and better able to travel, and you may make some arrangement to follow them if they should be gone forward. This very delay may enable you perhaps to come up with them earlier than if you had your will and set off in this hurried manner."

Gertrude yielded to the necessity, and returned home.

The whole of that night she watched for the morning. Mrs Hutchins tried to say words of comfort, but Gertrude heeded them not.

"I shall not come back till I have found her, Mrs Hutchins. I will follow them all over the world. If you like to let these rooms, do—do not let me stand in your way."

"Dear heart, don't think of me. Have you put up everything you will want? Have you any work to send home, or any message for the shops you work for?"

This removed Gertrude's thoughts forcibly in another direction. If, indeed, she should be forced to prolong her absence, some arrangement was absolutely necessary. This seemed too to advance her on her journey; it was at any rate doing something towards setting out.

Completely worn out, she slept for an hour towards morning.

Long before it was time to start, her nervous eagerness brought her to the coach-office. Mrs Hutchins came with her.

"You will write me a line, ma'am, just to tell me of your success."

Gertrude grasped the hand of her companion.

"Yes, yes," she said in a harsh discordant tone, that sounded strangely unlike her natural voice.

The coach set off at last, and Gertrude was in pursuit of her child, at the rate of eight miles an hour.

How slow and weary seemed the day!

At last the coach reached the lodge-gates. Gertrude descended from the jingling stage-coach, the guard flung out her portmanteau, and the stage drove on.

The blood beat tumultuously in her heart, and the next moment seemed to congeal to ice. In answer to her inquiry, the woman at the lodge, a hard-looking woman with a sour placidity of face, told her that the party at the Hall had broken up the day before, and that no one remained except my lord and lady, who were returning to town the next morning.

"Do you know?—did you see—whether a little girl who has been here on a visit with her father has gone away, or is she still at the Hall?"

"Indeed, ma'am, I cannot say," replied the woman. "I believe all the young nobility who have been visiting in the nursery went away directly after the ball."

The woman spoke stolidly, and with the most unimpressible indifference—the manner

not insolent only because it was devoid of all expression.

"Perhaps you will allow me to leave my travelling bag here, whilst I go to the Hall to inquire." Gertrude spoke gently and courteously.

"Yes, I suppose you may leave it," said the woman reluctantly; "you will hear no more than I have told you; her ladyship doesn't like seeing strangers at this time of day. It is not easy to see her at any time. Had you not better come again?"

But Gertrude was already out of hearing. She did not go to the grand entrance, but up a narrow path that led round the house to the offices.

Her dress was dusty and crumpled with a long day's travel, her face was harassed and weary, but Gertrude looked still an undeniable gentlewoman in her carriage and bearing. One of the men servants crossing the court saw her and approached; his manner was far



more respectful than that of the woman at the lodge.

"Is Miss Donnelly still here?" Gertrude's parched throat could scarcely articulate the question.

"I do not know, ma'am, but I will inquire, if you will come into the housekeeper's parlour. The party broke up yesterday, and I heard the nursery footman saying that Miss Donnelly was to leave with her father, but she may be here still."

Gertrude followed, thankful for the doubt so charitably thrown out.

The housekeeper—a stately middle-aged woman in stiff black silk, with her face drawn into an expression of repulsive dignity, though the features, being small, were somewhat overtaxed to produce it—looked up in surprised displeasure at the invasion of her parlour.

"A lady, ma'am, who has come to inquire for Miss Donnelly," said the footman.

"I am her mother," gasped Gertrude, "and I only heard yesterday that she was likely to be taken away to Ireland."

"Indeed," said the housekeeper coldly, "I do not know; the nursery is an entirely different branch of the establishment. Is her ladyship aware of your visit?"

"Oh, if I could see her ladyship, I should be most thankful."

"I really do not know," said the housekeeper, "her ladyship is not in the habit of being disturbed. You say that she knows you?"

"No," said Gertrude, "I never saw her. My husband and little girl have been here during the election. He is a friend of Lord Elvington's."

"Oh," rejoined the housekeeper, looking at her with her cold sullen face, "many sort of folks come at election times that my lady would neither see nor speak to at others; but you say your little girl has been on a visit to her ladyship's children?"

Gertrude bowed her head, she could not trust herself to speak—her eyes were fixed on the door. The good-natured footman returned at last with “Mrs Blisset’s compliments (the head nurse, ma’am) and Miss Donnelly went away with her father yesterday morning in the carriage of Mr Fitz-Vashipot;—she believes they were to sail from Holyhead for Dublin, but she is not certain. The young lady was quite well, ma’am, she bid me say.”

Gertrude’s look of despair touched the humane footman;—the housekeeper looked as if she saw and felt nothing but the inconvenience of having Gertrude standing there in the parlour, without any immediate prospect of getting rid of her.

“Is there anything I can do, ma’am? or any other inquiry you would like to make?”

“If I might see her ladyship for one minute I should be grateful;—she, at least, could tell me where they are gone.”

"I will ask Mr Williams, the groom of the chambers, whether her ladyship has left the dining-room. I will go and see what can be done."

"You had better take a seat until Mr James returns," said the housekeeper discontentedly, seating herself as she spoke in her large easy chair, and resuming the perusal of her newspaper.

Gertrude thankfully availed herself of the permission.

"Mr James," as the houskeeper called him, at length returned with the intelligence that her ladyship would have the pleasure of speaking to Mrs Donnelly in the library directly.

Gertrude rose, and courteously wishing the housekeeper good evening, followed her conductor along a matted passage wide enough to be called a corridor, and across a magnificent hall, paved with different kinds of marble arranged in mosaic, into a room filled with antique oak carvings and stained-

glass windows; the boards of the floor were of polished oak, as smooth as glass, except where they were covered in the centre with a rich Turkey carpet.

A handsome, haughty-looking woman, stood on the hearth-rug before the small wood fire that was burning in the chimney, summer-time as it was. A younger and less remarkable-looking woman was beside her.

"These election times bring one acquainted with strange people," said the elder lady, with a look of disgust. "One's household gods are desecrated, and the odour of bad society lingers over the house for months after all is over."

"Mrs Donnelly, my lady," said the footman, throwing open the door.

The stately lady advanced a step, and said,—

"I was told that you wished to see me."

"I came to fetch my little girl, who has been staying here with her papa, on Lord Elvington's invitation. I find she has been

taken away — can your ladyship tell me where?”

Lady Elvington's brow slightly clouded. She said, coldly,—

“Mr Donnelly brought his little girl for the election time; he left yesterday, taking the child with him. I do not know anything further about him.”

A good-natured looking middle-aged man entered the room and sauntered towards the fire-place.

“My lord,” said the lady, turning round, “do you chance to know anything of Mr Donnelly's movements? This lady is his wife, come to claim her little girl from us.”

“Eh—what? No,” said his lordship, coming forwards and looking at Gertrude. “I don't know anything about his movements; it strikes me I heard him say something about going to see his mother and his uncle, Sir Lucius O'Connor; and I think he agreed to cross over with Fitz-Vashipot. It was unpardonably thoughtless in him to take away the child without informing you;

but you need not be agitated, my dear Madam. Miss Clarissa will be in no danger. You would scarcely be in time to catch them at Holyhead, even if you were to take post-horses ; but a letter addressed to the care of Fitz-Vashipot would be sure to find your husband, who, no doubt, will take the earliest opportunity of repairing his omission. Do not be agitated, I beg ; depend upon it all is quite right, only a little irregularity in the form—he should have asked leave at head-quarters. A charming child Miss Clarissa—full of *espièglerie* ; she will be a dangerous beauty some of these days !

“ Will your lordship be so kind as to give me the address that will find my husband, and I will not trespass further on your time, except to thank her ladyship and yourself for the kindness you have shown my child.”

Her ladyship bowed coldly. His lordship said, in the hasty manner in which he always spoke,—

“ Oh, not at all—not at all ! She is

a delightful child. This is the address. But you cannot return to the village alone; one of the men shall go with you."

"Matilda, my dear, ring the bell, will you. Mrs Donnelly must need refreshment after her journey," said her ladyship, languidly.

Gertrude strenuously refused everything except the footman's guidance across the park, for it was now becoming dusk.

Her ladyship bowed coldly; his lordship shook hands cordially, and desired the groom of the chambers to direct James to see Mrs Donnelly safe to the inn in the village.

"I was told that my friend Donnelly had made a *mésalliance*, but if looks go for anything she might pass muster amongst half the women in the red-book," was the observation of his lordship after Gertrude had retired.

"She is a good woman enough, no doubt, but it is not pleasant to have her come asking one for her child, as though one had any concern in the matter. I wish, my lord, you would be more careful whom you



invite ; if anything unfortunate should occur, it will be very unpleasant to have it dated from our house. Who is that Mr Donnelly ? ”

“ He used to belong to Southend’s set. I have known him, on and off, a long time. The Whig Government gave him some appointment, I forget what, which he lost ; and then he was sent out to Africa, and returned lately. He is of a good Irish family ; but his ways and means are a mystery. I suppose he had money with his wife. She is a pretty creature, though she looked horribly anxious and jaded. I wonder who she was ? ”

“ Oh, nobody, of course, that we ever heard of or are likely to hear of ; ” and her ladyship settled herself luxuriously into her own particular chair. The servants entered with lights. His lordship took up the ‘ Edinburgh ’ — her ladyship began to cut the leaves of a new novel—whilst the lady called ‘ Matilda ’ made tea at another table.

## CHAPTER XIX.

THE landlady of the Wheatsheaf, seeing Gertrude accompanied by one of the footmen from the Hall, received her with a degree of zealous politeness which would scarcely have greeted her otherwise.

Seeing her extreme exhaustion, she suggested "a nice cup of tea and a new-laid egg." Gertrude sank wearily on the settee covered with check gingham which did duty for a sofa, and feebly wondered whether she were going to die. Physical weariness swallowed

up all distinction of suffering — she was as wretched as a human creature could be, and—live. But when misery is stretched beyond a certain point, confusion follows.

“The nice cup of tea” promised by the landlady scarcely justified its epithet—it was more like an infusion of chopped hay; the bread was sour, and the butter was salt; the room in which she sat smelled horribly of stale tobacco, and accused the lingering memory of strong beer and British brandy which had been consumed in unlimited quantity during the last election week.

A “village hostel,” however picturesque, is not the place for any great comfort. The Wheatsheaf stood on the village green; it was built with numerous gables and overhanging eaves; the chimneys were quaint—the thatch was dotted with houseleek and moss—the walls were dazzling with white-wash; an old patriarchal elm tree, beneath which was a bench, where all the toppers of the village congregated to enjoy the beauties

of nature and virtues of strong ale, stood upon the green in front of the porch.

Nothing by daylight, or twilight, or moonlight could look more attractive than this real country inn, the Wheatsheaf—nevertheless, the accommodations were scanty and far from comfortable. The bed-room to which Gertrude was ushered was a bare uncarpeted room, with the boards wide apart; a flock bed, which felt as if had been stuffed with the bodies and bones of a whole generation of geese and ducks, with the feathers omitted; coarse blue check window curtains; a single chair; and a looking-glass that made all it reflected crooked;—but Gertrude was too weary to notice externals. The good motherly landlady, seeing that she sat down listlessly in the chair, seemingly too stupified to be conscious of what she was doing, took upon herself to undress her, and “to see her comfortable,” as she expressed it, and Gertrude fell into a heavy slumber that lasted late into the fol-

lowing day—although even in her sleep she was conscious of being wretched.

Her landlady allowed her to sleep as long as she would, and it was near eleven o'clock when Gertrude came down into the parlour.

A basket of fruit had been sent down from the park by one of the under-gardeners, with "my lady's compliments to Mrs Donnelly." The family had all left the Hall that morning.

It made no difference to Gertrude, and yet at the news she felt like one stranded and shipwrecked on a desert island—the last link connecting her with Clarissa was snapped by their departure.

Gertrude had no place of action, but her instinct was to get back to London as soon as possible. It might be that there had been a letter sent to her containing some explanation, some clue to direct her course. The stage only passed through to London three days a week, and the present was not one

of them. Gertrude was therefore constrained to remain in her present quarters until the morrow, and this was the best thing that could have befallen. After breakfast she attempted to write a letter of appeal to her husband, but her powers both of body and mind had been overwrought, and she was incapable of writing a line.

She remained the whole day in a state of half stupor that was neither sleeping nor waking. The next morning she arose feeling somewhat more alive to things; the stage-coach was expected at ten o'clock in the forenoon, and she had at least the prospect of getting away—of doing something.

The greatest blow that could be dreaded had actually fallen, and she was still too much stunned to be conscious of the whole extent of her misery. Mrs Hutchins had everything prepared for her, as though she had been fully expected. She asked no questions, but behaved as much as possible as though nothing extraordinary had

taken place. One pleasant piece of intelligence she had to communicate. Lady Southend had returned to town, and had sent a message desiring to see her. Lord Southend and his bride had also arrived—all the friends who could help her were within her reach. Gertrude was too weary to feel any desire to talk; the time of words and tears had not yet come.

The next day Mrs Hutchins, who did not think it safe to lose sight of Gertrude, accompanied her to Lady Southend. The old lady had been informed of everything, so Gertrude was spared the trouble of entering upon details.

The old lady kissed her, and made her sit down beside her on the sofa.

“Now tell me about your journey. What have you heard?”

“It was a sudden arrangement. I think Augustus only agreed to go to Ireland because Mr Fitz-Somebody offered him a place in his carriage, and I think taking

away Clarissa was a sudden thought, almost an accident. I do not think there was any premeditation. He was always rash, and thoughtless, and headlong, from the first I ever knew of him."

"I think so too; and we must be careful how we take him, or else this whim may become a fixed idea. It will hamper his movements, and be attended with some inconvenience, to have a child like Clarissa attached to him. He hates inconvenience, and if we deal with him rightly he will be glad to be handsomely rid of her; but if we vex him, there is no saying what rash thing he may do out of spite. But I do not think — at least your husband did not look to me as if he were a malicious man."

"Oh do not trust to that," cried Gertrude, with a shiver. "You do not know him since he returned this time. He hates me, and if he takes it into his head that he can make me suffer through this act, he will never give up my child. He is so inconse-



quent that he may not have seen its effect yet; but if it strikes him, he will be glad to make me suffer to the utmost. I *feel* that he will. Can I not complain to a magistrate, and force him to give me back my own child? What right has he to take her from me?"

"My poor child! my poor child! Clarissa belongs lawfully to your husband, and not to you. He *can* do what he likes with her, so long as neither life nor limb, nor property, are endangered. We must hope for the best; he may be *induced* to do what we cannot obtain by any appeal to motives of law or justice."

Gertrude gave a wild gesture of dumb despair.

"Southend has much influence, and if anyone can persuade him it will be Southend, and I know he will do his utmost."

Gertrude groaned and writhed as though in agony; the hope was so vague and slender, and the despair so deep.

“ I will see Southend to-night. Give me your husband’s address. Do you write too. I do not advise you to follow him, at least not till we hear further, and know a little what he intends to do. In the meanwhile take care of your health and strength, you will need both; and, above all, do not give way to despair—that alone will be fatal to our success.”

Gertrude heard as though she heard not—she did not realise the meaning of the words that Lady Southend uttered; she looked at her blank and helpless when she ceased to speak.

“ Take her home, Mrs Hutchins, she will be better to-morrow. Do not worry her with talking to her. I will see Southend, and consult him what is the best to be done.”

Gertrude went away quite passively, like one walking in sleep.

When they arrived at home there was a letter for Gertrude, desiring her to go down to The Cottage directly if she wished to see her mother alive.

## CHAPTER XX.

WHILST his wife was in this sorrow and despair at home, Mr Augustus was

“ Lolling at ease behind four handsome bays,”

which whirled him along at a first-rate pace towards Holyhead. He found himself comfortable in body and happy in his mind. He was so constitutionally and incurably thoughtless, so entirely *inconsequent* in all he said and did, that he never saw beyond the impulse of the present moment, nor had the least notion of the shape his actions would take, nor to what result they would

go ; there was no *parti pris* or malice pre-pense in what he had done with regard to Clarissa.

The evening before the party at Elvington Park was to break up, Mr Fitz-Vashipot proposed to Mr Augustus that he should cross over to Ireland with him, and do a few electioneering jobs for him there.

Mr Fitz-Vashipot was an English commoner, possessing a large landed estate in Ireland. His influence was great, but the government at home had refused him a peerage. He had set his mind on becoming Lord Fitz-Vashipot, and, disappointed in this innocent aspiration, he purposed to get up a little wholesome opposition at the ensuing election. He only intended, however, to show what he *could* do, that the ministers might re-consider their ways; not by any means to drive them to despair—because despair never pays !

Mr Augustus was in his abnormal state of funds—viz., without any ; for there had been

high play at the Park, and though Mr Augustus had won considerably, an unlucky bet a couple of days ago had completely cleaned him out; even the latitude of "necessary expenses" did not furnish him with a decent excuse for applying to Lord Elvington. He did not relish the prospect of going back to his wife, after the charming society at the Park. But there was nothing else for him. He did not see his way clearly as to what was to become of him when he drifted from his present anchorage.

When, therefore, Mr Fitz-Vashipot proposed to frank him to Ireland, where "he might make himself devilish useful, and perhaps pick up something for himself worth having," it is not wonderful that Mr Augustus should consider it as a most opportune "stroke of fortune;" and as to making himself useful by doing the business of somebody else, that came quite natural to him. The most innately idle people are often the most indefatigable in that respect.

The taking Clarissa with him, that was the accident of a moment. By way of making a show of modest reluctance, and to enhance his value, Mr Augustus objected that he had his little daughter, who was too young to travel alone home to her mother.

“Bring her along with you, my boy; she will be charming company for us, and she shall give the colours! What do you say to that, Miss Beauty? Will you come and help us to return a Member of Parliament?”

“If you will let me go back soon to mamma I have no objection, but I cannot be spared long,” replied Miss Clarissa with a demure dignity that made Mr Fitz-Vashipot clap his hands and laugh, and cry “Excellent!—by Jove! she shall make them a speech.”

It was less trouble at the moment for Mr Augustus to take Clarissa along with him than to make arrangements for sending her home, and even to be spared from paying

her coach fare was a consideration. He did not realise the terrible blow to Gertrude, to be told that he had taken her child away with him; indeed, that she received any announcement at all was the merest accident. Lord Elvington asked him if he wanted a frank? and it just struck him that he might as well write a line and tell Gertrude he was going to Ireland. If it had been necessary to go to the next room for a sheet of paper, it would not have been done; but the writing materials chanced to lie on the table before him.

At first Clarissa was enchanted; she laughed and chattered, and had so many pretty ways, that both the gentlemen were kept highly amused. But at night the young lady's spirits subsided. She flung herself down on the floor, and cried for her mamma with so much vehemence, that the chambermaid into whose charge she had been consigned sent for her papa in dismay.

Mr. Augustus, who had never seen her except in smiles, heartily regretted he had been such a fool as to encumber himself with her; if Gertrude had appeared at that moment, he would have welcomed her arrival as "a stroke of fortune." But she did *not* appear, and it was no longer a simple matter to send Clarissa home. There was nothing for it now but to take her forwards. She was at length exhausted by crying, and pacified by the promise that she should see her mamma the next day, the poor child sobbed herself to sleep.

The next day they sailed, and poor Clarissa,

"By expectation every day beguiled,"

learned her first lesson in sorrow. She grew apparently more reconciled, and her spirits revived with the lightness of childhood; but she generally cried herself to sleep at night, and often in the midst of being quite lively and merry she would burst out



into passionate crying for her mamma. The poor child was home-sick and heart-sick, and there was no one to comfort her.

They at last arrived—after what appeared to Clarissa a journey that would never end—at the Castle of Bally-shally-a-sloe, county Sligo, the seat of Mr Fitz-Vashipot, and one of the boroughs at stake in the approaching election. Clarissa was consigned to the care of the housekeeper, and the two gentlemen commenced their electioneering operations. It was in the good old times, when an election lasted many days, and many things were done in public that in these reformed days hide their fragrancy under a decent bushel. In the riot and confusion and excitement which ensued, Clarissa was almost forgotten. Sometimes, when there was any “grand company,” she was sent into the drawing-room before dinner; otherwise she was left entirely to the servants of an ill-conducted, disorganised bachelor’s household. It was altogether the last place in which a mother would have

placed her child; and even Mr Augustus, careless as he was, went himself to the housekeeper—an elderly woman, whose soul was vexed with the doings she saw on all hands—and entreated her to keep Clarissa in her room, and not to let her run wild, until such time as he could send her to her grandmother.

“ Indeed, sir! and I think it is her own mother who will be after having a sore heart for the loss of her. The poor child, for all she looks so lively just now, is fretting after her mother till it grieves me to see her; if I gather rightly from what she tells me, the lady does not know where she is; and this morning Miss Clary says in her pretty way, “ Oh, Norah! mamma is sitting by the window now at her work, and expecting me home, and how am I ever to get out of this big house?”

“ Well, well, try to put all that out of her head. I do not choose her to go back to her mamma: not yet, at any rate—

but keep her with you until I have time to attend to her."

Mr Augustus put a golden guinea into Mrs Norah's hand, and walked off whistling, and switching his boots with a riding-whip.

He had that morning received a letter from Lord Southend—written with the best intentions, and the worst possible tact.

Lord Southend had in his day been a gay and somewhat unscrupulous bachelor—but he had married recently, and cast off the slough of his bachelor days, and come out bright and shining in the garments of praise and respectability. Having worn out all the amusement there was to be found in the free and easy life of old, he had become weary of his "unchartered freedom," and now found the straight-laces of decorum a comfortable support. He looked with all the more sternness on the course which Augustus was pursuing, as nobody knew better than himself how extremely worthless it was. Besides all this, he had not forgiven Augustus for bringing discredit

on his recommendation by running away from his situation and his creditors. But though all these considerations might account to those aware of them, for the *grand seigneur* tone of his letter, they did not render it the least pleasanter to receive.

He called Augustus roundly to account for "the great trouble and distress into which he had plunged his industrious and excellent wife;" he exhorted him, much in the style of the reformed King Henry, to amend his life; and concluded by expressing a hope that Miss Clarissa might at once be restored to her mother before other measures were resorted to.

The letter contained no money, nor any intimation of favours to come.

Mr Augustus thought he discerned clearly that he had nothing more to hope from Lord Southend; and, as he imagined he had supplied himself with another, and an equally efficient, patron in Mr Fitz-Vashipot, he had no motive for endeavouring to propitiate Lord

Southend; he, therefore, indulged himself in the luxury of resentment.

Gertrude had written also by the same post—but *her* letter, through some of the wild contradictions and perversities that prevail in this world, never reached him; if it had, his conduct would perhaps have been different, for she had written a gentle and touching letter, calculated to soothe all the self-love she might have ruffled. She entreated him to come home, and she spoke of Clarissa as *their* child; with wonderful instinct she had divined what to say and what to avoid—it was a masterpiece of maternal sagacity and tenderness;—*and that letter was lost*. The good angel of Augustus Donnelly slumbered when that occurred, for it might have saved him from committing an act of devilish cruelty; at first it had only been an act of culpable thoughtlessness, but, persisted in, its name became a word with a deadly meaning.

Lord Southend's well-meant commendations

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of Gertrude converted the smouldering dislike and sullen wounded self-love of Mr Augustus into active malice. He ceased to care for the trouble Clarissa gave him, in the consciousness of the power it gave him to torment his wife. He sat down and wrote the two following letters. The first was in reply to Lord Southend :—

“ My Lord,

“ I should *scorn* myself were I to allow the sense of *past* favours to interfere with the expression of my *sincere* and *candid* opinion of your lordship’s letter just received. I consider it an intrusion into the *privacy* of my affairs, and I treat the assertions it contains with the *contempt* they merit. Your lordship has shown me *some* kindness in *days gone by*, and I called you *friend*; but I cast you from me *like a withered leaf*, and we are *henceforth* strangers! For your information, I tell you that it is *not* my intention to allow my daughter to return to her mother,

however '*industrious*' or '*excellent*' it may please your lordship to consider her.

“ Your lordship's obedient servant,  
“ AUGUSTUS DONNELLY.”

To Gertrude he wrote more laconically :

“ Gertrude,

“ As it is my *decided* intention not to allow you to have any further charge of your daughter, I beg that you will acquiesce, and not persecute me with your *ill humour*, nor instigate *strangers* to insult me with their remarks upon my *private concerns*. I am *perfectly aware* of your sentiments towards me, and if you send me any further letters I shall *not* read them.

“ Your husband,

“ A. DONNELLY.”

When Mr Augustus read over these letters he was highly satisfied both with the matter and the diction. He got them franked and posted, and felt a self-complacency to which his bosom had long been a stranger. He

would have been highly affronted had any one told him that it was a mere flash in the pan, that he was incapable of holding to any purpose which involved the slightest inconvenience, and that, notwithstanding all his marital bluster, he would send Miss Clarissa back to her mother the moment it suited him to do so.

If Gertrude had known this, it would have saved her from mortal pain; but we none of us make allowance for the inconsistency of human nature in our judgment of things and people; we persist in believing that they will act according to programme—it is our own superstition that invests them with their power.



## CHAPTER XXI.

WHEN Gertrude reached The Cottage she found that her mother was better—she was still trembling on the brink of the grave; but the crisis was past—she was in no immediate danger unless she had a relapse.

This was some consolation to Gertrude,—the last drop had not been added to the “waters of the full cup” that had been “wrung out to her.”

Gertrude took her station beside her mother’s bed, and as all agitation and emotion would, the doctor declared, be fatal to the patient, Gertrude was enabled to control all the evidence

of her own suffering, and to be as quiet and calm as though she had come in from an ordinary walk. Mrs Morley was in a condition in which more depended upon the nurse than the doctor; Gertrude watched day and night, and felt glad that her mother was at least spared a grief that was almost heavier than she could bear. But, even whilst this thought passed in her mind, "the sin of her youth" rose up to her memory like an accusing spirit,—*she* had inflicted upon the mother lying there before her a sorrow far more bitter than even the loss of Clarissa, for she had added to it the sting of ingratitude, her own "sin had found her out," and it was only her own measure that had been meted out to her. She had received no sorrow but what she had hitherto deserved. She saw her own past life in a different light to what she had hitherto regarded it. She had known great sorrow and remorse for her conduct to her parents; but now it seemed to her so black that nothing could equal its base-

ness, that no other human being was so bad and wicked as she had been; her repentance began strong and fresh, as though she had never before seen the enormity of her sin. It was true that sorrow had come upon her; but what was she that she should complain? It seemed to her that she ought rather to receive and entertain her great sorrow in quietness and reverence, as though it were an angel sent from God to commune with her heart.

The hours thus spent in silent watching beside her mother's bed were laden with the seed of a new and hidden life.

If we would only take sorrow to our heart when it comes upon us, and treat it nobly, we should find that we had entertained an angel unawares.

At length, thanks in great measure humanly speaking to Gertrude's care and skill in nursing, Mrs Morley was pronounced convalescent, and allowed to come down stairs.

Then Gertrude told her story, and expressed

her desire to go to Ireland in search of her daughter.

Mrs Morley's sympathy was strong and warm, as a mother's only can be. Simon Morley was inclined in his heart to take a very prosaic view of the matter; he considered that Gertrude was now without encumbrances, and might come and live with them, and be re-instated in all her privileges as their daughter. He thought it only right that Mr Augustus should support his own child, and as for Gertrude's feelings, he did not understand them; he could only feel and judge like a man and a parish overseer, as he was!

He had the grace, however, to abstain from giving any decided utterance to these opinions. He only grunted and puffed clouds of smoke, and asked Gertrude if she thought there was any chance of getting back the child without getting hold of the husband at the same time, and intimated

she had better keep quiet and not run the risk of *that*.

At length the letter came from Mr Augustus, which was *not* in answer to hers. Gertrude handed it to her father in silence. He put on his spectacles and read it through.

“ A pitiful jackanapes ! He deserves to be flogged at a cart-tail ! Why, rough as I am, and queer-tempered as I am, I would sooner have cut off my right hand than have written such a letter ! Read it, missis, and tell us what *you* think about it. Nay, lass, never cry. He is not worth it. Thou shalt go to Ireland, if it took the last penny I had ; and thou shalt get thy little lass back again. Never fear ! A pitiful scoundrel ! A pretty fellow *he* is, to write himself ‘ your husband.’ It was a bad day when you first clapped your eyes on him. But I am not going into that again. I have forgiven thee, and there is an end of

it. Thou shalt go, and I will go with thee. Hang it! I should enjoy circumventing the rascal. I will consult lawyer Sadler on the best way of going to work. He is a clever fellow! none more so. He got a chap off from being hanged who deserved it as sure as he was born."

This declaration of his intentions had the effect of putting Simon Morley into high spirits—either the prospect of circumventing his son-in-law, or the testimony of his conscience that he was acting the part of an affectionate parent made him feel quite happy.

The next day there came a letter from Lord Southend enclosing the one he had received from Mr Augustus. He expressed in a few formal lines his regret at the ill-result of his interference, and begged that if he could do anything more to serve her she would let him know. The letter was perfectly courteous, but it spoke plainly of the difference between the Lord Southend

of yesterday and to-day. The fact was, that Lord Southend had grown dreadfully discreet, it had been suggested to him, "that he had better not mix himself up in the affairs of a pretty woman like Mrs Donnelly, whose husband might after all *have reasons* for what he had done," &c., &c., and other suggestions of a like nature, which he, caressed as prudent, but an impartial recording angel would have set them down to a great disinclination to be bothered with any further applications about Mr Augustus and his concerns. He fancied that he "owed it to his wife" not to keep up any further intercourse with such people. Lord Southend was growing indolent and middle-aged, and Matrimony bore the blame of it.

Lady Southend continued a staunch friend ; she wrote Gertrude encouraging letters ; advised her to set off to Ireland without delay to search for Clarissa, and volunteered, if it came to the necessity of an appeal to the Chancellor, to furnish the funds. The old spirit which had

animated her ladyship in her own conjugal difficulties, blazed out afresh—the old lady was sorry to her heart for Gertrude, but, nevertheless, she rather enjoyed entering the lists against any husband whatever.

She sent Gertrude letters of introduction to friends of hers in different parts of Ireland, they were all desired to receive Gertrude as her ladyship's friend, and to forward her views in any way they possibly could.

Gertrude smiled bitterly when she received a sheaf of letters, directed to Viscountesses, Marchionesses, and Honourable Ladyships, not a few—in all which she was described as the dear and especial friend of Lady Southend. It was her own old early dream of worldly consideration come true, but endorsed with the bitter mockery of her own deep grief.

As soon as Mrs Morley was well enough to be left, Gertrude prepared for her journey to Ireland to endeavour to reclaim her child from her husband.



Simon Morley accompanied her as far as Holyhead, and saw her on board the packet. He grasped Gertrude's hand at parting, and whispered,

"Don't spare the brass, lass ! don't spare the brass !—Thee art welcome to all thou wants—there is nought like brass for going through the world and getting thy ends—God bless thee, and I wish thee well ! "

This was the most paternal benediction which had ever passed Simon Morley's lips. The state of opposition in which she stood towards her husband seemed to restore her in his eyes to all the virtue of filial allegiance.

The vessel weighed anchor, and all Gertrude's sorrows and anxieties were for the time merged into the one miserable fact of being sea-sick. This was her first experience on the sea, and it came upon her with a force and originality not to be gainsaid or set aside by any other consideration whatever.

She was dreadfully ill ; and even the

stewardess, blasée as she was to this branch of human suffering, became somewhat alarmed.

The passage was long and stormy, and when the vessel reached Kingstown Gertrude had to be carried on shore to the hotel.

## CHAPTER XXII.

GERTRUDE was not able to travel the next day ; her enforced repose was made more tolerable, by the fact that the stage coach which would take her the first twenty miles of her journey only ran two days in the week, and would not start until the morrow.

Her own sorrow had become merged in the idea of what Clarissa would be suffering away from her. Thrown amongst strangers—home-sick and heart-sick, and no one to comfort her. This was no alleviation of her own pain—it was only a form it took,

which made it harder to endure. All day long, and all night through her sleep, she heard the little voice of Clarissa calling, "Mamma, mamma, come and take me away!"

Her intention was to proceed first to the residence of Mr Fitz-Vashipot at Bally-ashally-na-sloe, county Sligo; but it was a long way off, four days' journey, as journeys were then transacted.

No one at the inn could give her any definite information how she was to get there, and she walked to the post-office to inquire; but the process of conveying letters across the country was intricate, and left it little less than miraculous how letters ever found their way to those intended to read them. No public conveyance went within thirty miles of the place; and when Mr Fitz-Vashipot was at his castle, which was not often, he sent his own rider to Dublin for them, who had relays of post-horses all the way. Less considerable people residing

in the neighbourhood always sent a man or boy to the point where the letter-bags were left under a stone by the coach as it passed, to be called for; and the letters that were to go were deposited in the same place, and taken up by the coach on its return.

Any definite directions were clearly out of the question, so Gertrude resigned herself to doing the best she could when the coach should put her down. The landlady tried to comfort her, by saying,—

“That she would find ground to walk upon, and God’s sky to cover her, go where she would.”

To set off—to be doing something, was the one desire that consumed Gertrude—the walls crushed her—the air stifled her—repose was impossible.

The coach was to start at five o’clock in the morning. Gertrude did not undress, in order that she might be ready in a moment; the landlady had unconsciously driven her nearly mad, by saying,—

"It is to be hoped there will be room."

Gertrude lay awake all night, torturing herself by this possibility, and thinking of what she should do *in case* all the places were taken.

However, at five o'clock, just as she had fallen into a cold, troubled sleep, the guard's horn sounded, and the clattering of the horses was heard in the court-yard.

Gertrude started up, fearing she was left behind, and that it was the *departure*, and not the arrival, of the coach she had heard.

She was ready in a moment, although her trembling fingers could scarcely tie her bonnet.

The chambermaid came in with some breakfast, saying,—

"Make haste, ma'am; but there is no hurry, and missis begs you will drink a dish of hot tea before you start. She left it out for you last night, and I got up myself to make it; you see the missis is a lady and she does not get up for the coach. There is no hurry

in life—the coachman has been told you are coming.”

“Is there room?” asked Gertrude, faintly.

“To be sure, ma’am, no fear of that—you will have the inside all to yourself; so drink your tea in peace, and may the Blessed Virgin have you in her own keeping, Amen.”

“Now then, is the lady coming?” cried the voice of the “boots.”

“Don’t tremble so, ma’am, you are all right, it is only his way to hurry people; the coach won’t go for a matter of ten minutes yet.”

Until she was seated and the coach-door shut upon her, Gertrude did not lose the sickening nightmare feeling that the coach would drive off before her eyes, and leave her vainly trying to reach it. When once seated, the sense of relief and safety overcame her, and she burst into tears.

Every one of the rough men standing round the coach knew that Gertrude was going in search of her child, who had been

spirited away from her by her husband; and many expressions of good wishes and encouragement met her ear.

At length the horses were harnessed: the coachman, after coming to the window to hope that her ladyship felt comfortable, mounted his box, and after more noise and bustle than would have sufficed to set a whole solar system in motion, the coach was got under weigh.

Human kindness and human sympathy Gertrude found abundantly throughout her journey, but the material means of continuing her progress were not so easily attainable.

The stage coach left her at the door of a dirty ill-kept inn, in a ruinous-looking town, which might have been situated in the moon for anything she knew about its name or nature.

The coachman had, however, spoken to the landlady about her, and whispered her story; the landlady, a compassionate woman, was willing to do anything under heaven for



the poor lady—except furnish her with post-horses—for these, indeed, it was not the *will* that was wanting, “but she kept none—they were so seldom called for.”

She brought Gertrude into the kitchen, and made her sit by the fire, and told her a dozen times over that if she had come only a month before she would have found running and racing enough on account of the elections.

“I must go on foot then,” said Gertrude.

A decent farmer, who was sitting with some refreshment before him on the other side of the fire-place, offered to take her as far as Ballynuggery, if she did not mind riding behind him on his dame’s pillion, as soon as he had given his horse a feed of hay.”

Gertrude gratefully accepted the offer.

“Bring the creature here,” said the good-natured landlady, “and let it have a good feed of corn, to put some spirit into it; and whilst the beast is getting ready, your

ladyship must have a taste of something to eat. It would be a sin to go out fasting, and it is what neither man nor beast ever does from this house."

Little as she felt inclined for food, Gertrude felt the need there was to keep up her strength; accordingly, she compelled herself to swallow some of the boiled chicken and bacon which the good-natured landlady set before her.

The man who had been out to see after his horse came in whilst she was eating, and sat down beside the fire, and began to smoke in silence. As soon as he perceived that Gertrude had finished, he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and rose, and nodding to her, said—

"Now, if you are ready, ma'am, I am ready too; you shall not be delayed by me. A sore heart makes one impatient."

The horse was brought to the door. Gertrude mounted on the pillion. The landlady wrapped her own blue cloak round her knees,

and begging God and the Holy Virgin to have her in their keeping, she watched Gertrude and her companion depart.

The man was silent, for he saw that Gertrude was in no disposition for conversation.

Their road lay through a wild flat country, very thinly peopled, and only partially cultivated—a wild expanse of bog was the chief feature, the silence was intense, and made the sound of the horse's hoofs loud and ominous. The dead loneliness affected Gertrude painfully. She felt frightened when she saw with her eyes, and realised the distance that had been placed betwixt herself and her child.

It was near sunset when they reached Ballynuggery. Gertrude did not know that her companion had sacrificed a day's harvesting to bring her on her journey. He refused all remuneration, and Gertrude had difficulty in prevailing upon him to take some refreshment with her; when at last he complied, it was evidently from the fear that she

would be disobliged by a refusal. When Gertrude tried to utter her sense of the kindness he had shown her, he replied quietly,—

“Sure, then, I have only done as I would wish another to do by me and mine, if we were in the like trouble.”

He did more than this; he procured her a horse and guide for the next day, and so wrought on the man’s good feelings that he promised to be ready to start by sunrise, that the poor lady might make a long day’s journey.

When her companion went to wish her “Good-bye”—for he had to return after a few hours’ rest—Gertrude detached a small cornelian cross from her watch, and putting it into his hands, begged him to keep it in remembrance of his Christian deed towards her.

“I’ll keep it ma’am; and I will pray to the Holy Mother to comfort your heart, since it is Herself that can pity you.”

The man departed, and Gertrude never saw or heard of him again in this world. .

Her road, the next day, lay across a wild mountain pass. Gertrude's heart was too pre-occupied to leave her room for fear; she seemed to be borne up with wings, or rather to move through difficulties like a sleep-walker. She was conscious of but one wish—to get on.

Towards evening they reached a village within twenty miles of the place she was bound to, and, although her present guide had been more stolid and less sympathetic than her last, yet he was sufficiently moved to volunteer that if the lady found herself sufficiently rested after an hour or two he would find another horse, and go on with her to the end of her journey—for the moon would then be risen, and it would be as light as day.

Gertrude was only too thankful for the offer,—in which they both overlooked the

fact of the untimely hour at which they would reach the residence of Mr Fitz-Vashipot.

The roads were so bad that their progress was heavy ; they travelled the whole night, and dawn was breaking as they halted at the entrance of what should have been the park of Bally-shally-na-sloe. A great deal of the timber had been cut down, and the place had a desecrated desolate air, that gave the beholder, if he loved trees, a sensation as of physical pain.

Avoiding as well as they could the felled trees that lay across the paths, they made their way to the mansion, which was an immense rambling house, built of dark red brick, with re-turned wings : the offices were behind. It would have been a handsome place had it not looked so dirty and neglected.

" In regard that we are so early," said her conductor, " we had best go round through a small wicket I know of, which will take

us to the housekeepers' premises, maybe some of the servants are astir.

Gertrude acquiesced; she felt so sick, and her heart beat so wildly, that she could not articulate a word.

The first word she heard confirmed her worst fears—Mr Fitz-Vashipot and all the gentlemen were gone away, and the little girl had gone with them too—none of the servants knew where, but, perhaps, when the housekeeper got up she might know something. In the meantime, Gertrude and her guide were urged to come in and sit by the fire until the housekeeper could see them.

It was something to be on the spot where her child had been so recently; to poor Gertrude time had long lost its distinctions—it seemed a year since Clarissa had gone from her.

Whilst waiting in the kitchen, the only place where she could be introduced, Gertrude heard much of Clarissa, of her health, of

her "pretty ways," as the dairymaid called them, of what she used to do, and how she fretted after her mamma.

Gertrude's heart felt bursting with impatience and despair—she was broken too with fatigue and anxiety—she was in fact on the brink of a brain fever.

"If you would only call the housekeeper, perhaps, when she knows who it is that is here, she will not object to rising before her usual time; tell her I am Clarissa's mother."

Mrs Brian did not make herself waited for, almost before Gertrude hoped she came.

"Come into my room, ma'am, and I will tell you all I can; the little girl is in good health, at least when she left here three weeks ago."

Gertrude followed the housekeeper to her room, where traces of Clarissa's presence were still visible—an old broken slate scrawled over with childish drawings—an old child's chair and table—and a defaced doll.

Gertrude burst into tears, that seemed to



break her whole frame to pieces by their violence. She cried in piercing tones, "Oh! Clarissa! Clarissa! where are you?"

The housekeeper wept for sympathy, and the servants who had followed all joined in the "voice of weeping."

At length the housekeeper recovered her composure sufficiently to clear the room of every one except Gertrude and herself. Gertrude became gradually calmer. Though her tears continued to flow, it was more gently.

"Tell where they have taken her."

"I do not know," replied the woman. She cried bitterly to leave here, for she felt safe-like with me, and she hoped you would come and fetch her. She did not know where she was going. Once Mr Donnelly mentioned her grandmamma, but he told her nothing. The poor lamb was home-sick; she talked of you greatly; every night when she said her prayers she added one to beg God to send you to take her away; and

see, ma'am, she left this. Her father came in while she was writing it, and made her leave off. He flung it into the fire, but it fell out, and I picked it up."

Mrs Brian went to a drawer, and took out a sheet of scorched, dirty writing-paper, on which a letter had been begun in childish characters that had scarcely shape in them. Gertrude seized on it with ravenous eagerness.

Mrs Brian continued talking to her about Clarissa, and telling her everything that she could remember, however trivial, that she had said or done.

Her words dropped like water in the desert. Gertrude listened with helpless eagerness. She could scarcely comprehend what she heard, and she made Mrs Brian repeat her story again and again.

One of the domestics put his head in at the door, saying,—

" Please, Mrs Brian, ma'am, Father O'Toole is in the kitchen; he was passing by, and came in just promiscuous, to give us his

blessing, and maybe it would be a comfort to the poor lady there."

"Yes; ask his Reverence to step forwards," said Mrs Brian.

The nervous strength that had supported Gertrude had now given way, and she sat crouched together taking heed of nothing.

Father O'Toole came in; he did not at the first glance look like a visitor to the house of mourning. He was short and rather fat, with a good-humoured face, red, and weather-beaten; but he had lived in the midst of scenes of suffering and poverty all his life. He could speak to misery "in its own tongue." His voice took a tender, sympathising tone, and his little round figure became instinct with the dignity of his high calling when he approached a sufferer needing his consolation.

He looked pitifully on Gertrude, who did not look up on his entrance.

"God be merciful to you, my daughter," said he, making the sign of a cross reve-

rently. "What is the trouble that has been laid upon her, Mrs Brian?"

Mrs Brian told him in as few words as could be reasonably expected, and expatiated upon Clarissa's beauty and winning ways.

"I remember her, I have seen her," said he.

Gertrude looked up quickly—"Do you know where she is now?"

"No, I do not. But one day, when I dined here, I heard the child's father speak of going to visit his uncle, Sir Lucius Donnell. He may be there now.

"You are only a day's journey from Glenmore, where he lives. You might be there by this time to-morrow if you are able to travel."

Gertrude's faculties seemed to be entirely worn out. She could no longer take in what she heard.

"Say it again. I do not understand."

The priest repeated his words of encouragement, and added—"I know Sir Lucius, and I will go along with you."

"She travelled all night and all yesterday. She has not rested since she left Dublin," said Mrs Brian.

"Well, then, put her to bed. She shall not stir a foot to-day, and as soon as she can move and is come a little to herself, I will go wherever she wishes. I will not leave her until by the blessing of Providence she has found her daughter, or I see her safe amongst friends, though to be sure when she came to you she fell in with a Christian. So now, Mrs Brian, ma'am, you do your part, and then I will be ready to do mine. Meanwhile I will be after getting some breakfast."

"It is the best of everything your Reverence deserves," said Mrs Brian, who was beginning to busy herself about Gertrude.

A comfortable bed was made up in the housekeeper's room, and Gertrude passively allowed herself to be undressed and laid upon it. The room was darkened, and Mrs Brian herself kept watch beside her.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

WHEN Gertrude awoke after a sleep that had lasted some hours, she was much refreshed, and appeared to have recovered all her strength both of body and mind. She would gladly have started at once, but the priest represented the advantage of remaining where she was for the remainder of that day, and setting off at an early hour next morning.

If Clarissa was not at Glenmore, then Gertrude might proceed to the village where old Mrs Donnelly had retired. The priest, who knew well that part of the country,

assured her, that she might reach Glen-pass (the name of Mrs Donnelly's place of residence) the same evening. If no Clarissa or tidings of her were to be obtained there, the priest advised that Gertrude should return to Dublin, and there communicate with Mr Fitz-Vashipot himself, who would by that time have returned from Paris, whither, Mrs Brian said, he purposed going when he left Bally-na-sloe.

A great change passed over Gertrude during that day. The feverish eagerness which had consumed her was gone, she appeared to have risen superior to all emotions of tenderness, or anxiety, all other feelings were merged in the stern determination to recover her child. She was guided and strengthened by a steady purpose, and no weak or tender recollection was allowed to absorb the strength needed for action. Very quiet and very grave she was, calm and self-collected.

The next morning very early, Gertrude and Father O'Toole set off on their journey,

each mounted on a stout shaggy pony, accustomed to the roads. Their route lay over a mountain pass, and across a country where travellers were obliged to go through bye places in default of a high road.

Towards three o'clock in the afternoon, Gertrude and her companion reached Glenmore, a rambling village, headed by a somewhat dilapidated specimen of Elizabethan building—grey stone, with many gables and twisted chimneys, standing in the midst of grounds that had gone to a wilderness, and a moat which was covered with duckweed.

This was the seat of Sir Lucius Donnelly, and the very heart of the family grandeur. They rode up the broad but rough and unrolled walk that led to the deep entrance porch, which was thickly covered with a luxuriant growth of ivy. No inhabitants were to be seen except a couple of large grey shaggy hounds, which were sleeping in the sun with their heads between their stretched-out paws. They roused themselves at the sound



of the horses' feet, and rushed towards them uttering a deep-mouthed bay calculated to shake the nerves and check the advance of strangers.

"What, Juno! Ranger!—bad manners to ye! Don't you know me? Quiet, you brutes!" said Father o'Toole, cracking his whip. The dogs appeared to recognise his voice, for they began to fawn upon him, though they continued to eye Gertrude with suspicion.

A large, athletic, patriarchal-looking man, with milk-white hair, which fell upon his shoulders—jet-black eyebrows overshadowing a pair of large, bright, fierce-looking eyes—advanced from the house to meet them.

This was no other than Sir Lucius Donnelly, Bart., the fountain of all the Donnelly family grandeur—the flesh and blood embodiment of Mrs Donnelly's mythic traditions of the dignity of the family!

He shaded his eyes from the sun as he approached them, and then recognising the

priest, said, with a certain dignified cordiality,—

“You are welcome, Father O’Toole—and you also, fair madam, a thousand times welcome.”

“This lady is the wife of your nephew, Augustus Donnelly,” said Father O’Toole.

“Ah, I have heard of her,” replied the old gentleman, with a shade of reserve in his manner. “You are welcome, madam, to the family.”

He assisted her to alight with punctilious courtesy, but there was a want of the cheeriness with which he had first spoken.

“All the men are afield,—I believe I am the only one at home.”

Indeed the house was as silent as the Palace of the Sleeping Beauty.

The old chief of the family handed Gertrude with old-fashioned courtesy across the great hall into a small octagonal room, furnished in the fashion of a century before; the furniture, of course, much the worse for

the lapse of time, and wofully in need of a housemaid's ministry.

He made Gertrude seat herself in his own large leathern chair, and then left her alone with Father O'Toole, whilst he went to see if there were anyone to take the ponies.

"Clarissa is not here," said Gertrude, "or he would have told us;—we may continue our journey as soon as you are rested."

"I am ready at any moment—but we must stay a little while, he may know something about your husband; at any rate he will tell us where to find Mrs Donnelly."

Gertrude said no more. In a few minutes Sir Lucius returned, followed by a rosy, smiling servant girl, who proceeded to lay the cloth, and cover the table with a substantial meal.

"Have you come far to-day?"

"Well, we left Bally-na-Sloe this morning, and you do not ask what has brought us—

we might for all the world have fallen down, like the image of Lady Diana, from Jupiter! Are you not surprised now?"

"You shall talk after you have eaten and drank, and not before."

"There was a reserve and stiffness through all his hospitality; a silence quite at variance with his usual manners—but Gertrude was scarcely conscious of his presence, and was quite insensible to the fact that she was in the presence of the great man of the Donnellys.

Father O'Toole felt far more awkward than Gertrude. He knew that Sir Lucius was expecting an explanation, and he knew that, with all his politeness, he considered Gertrude an intruder into the family. He hastened to explain what had brought them, and their hope of hearing tidings of Mr Augustus.

The old gentleman had heard nothing of his nephew since his departure for Africa with his friend Sir Simon. He expressed great concern at what he heard—told Ger-

trude he would be proud of her company as long as she liked to stay—and thought that, if his nephew were in the neighbourhood, he would be sure to come; but as to throwing any light on his proceedings, or suggesting any plan, that was quite out of his line—he could do nothing, and he did not even seem to feel the need of doing anything.

“Oh! surely, surely he will never keep the child from her mother!” were the words he reiterated in a bland, soothing tone at every pause.

“Can you tell us where we shall find Madam Donnelly, your respected sister-in-law?”

“Surely she is at Glen-pass, twelve miles away. My niece is at Dublin, going to the Castle balls, and treated with every respect by his Excellency, who is my particular friend. I dined with him when I was last there.”

“Well, then, Sir Lucius, we must push on, or it will be dark before we get to Glen-pass, for the moon is not to be counted

for daylight, harvest moon though she be. I will fetch the beasts, with your leave."

Gertrude looked gratefully at Father O'Toole when he said this. Sir Lucius looked offended, for want of knowing exactly what to do; he drew himself up, and said, stiffly,—

"Of course, if you please to go, you must; but I think it strange that you are in such haste."

The priest went round for the ponies, and Gertrude sat watching through the window for his return, quite unconscious of the presence of Sir Lucius. When he returned, leading them by their bridle, she rose. She heard the voice of Sir Lucius dimly sounding, but what he said she did not know. She looked at him with her large dilated eyes, bright and glittering, and gave him a strange, absent smile, when he put the reins in her hand. She appeared to say something, for her lips moved, but no sound came from

them. The priest remained a moment behind, to bid his host farewell.

"Is she mad, do you think?" asked the old man.

"No; only sorely stricken and afflicted. I will not leave her till I see her safe with friends."

Gertrude had reached the gate before the priest overtook her. A few moments more, and a turning in the road hid Glenmore from the view—and it was like a dream that Gertrude had been there.

It was eight o'clock before they reached Glen-pass, where old Mrs Donnelly had enshrined herself. It was a naked grey-stone house, without any shelter except the black mountain behind it.

Mrs Donnelly was little changed from what she had been when Gertrude left her in London, except that the country air had renovated her health. The miniature of the departed Admiral still reposed upon her faithful and ample bosom; and her dress of

purple satin was evidently hastening to the end of its term of service ; but her turban was as dignified as if it had been a diadem. She kept up her dignity, and was Mrs Donnelly still !

She might be astonished to see Gertrude, but Gertrude was scarcely conscious of seeing her. She cut short the stately periods of her mother-in-law's reception-speech by impatiently motioning the priest to speak—she could not find voice to utter a word herself.

“No, she is not here. I have not seen my son ; I did not know that he was in England. My poor Gertrude, I am sorry for you !”

“Are you ?” said Gertrude, looking at her, and touched by the tone in which she spoke.

“Oh, Mrs Donnelly, tell me what I must do ! How am I to get back Clarissa ? My last hope was that he had brought her here to you !”

“Alas, Gertrude,—I know nothing, I see



nothing, I hear nothing in this place. Tell me all that has happened !”

But Gertrude was in no condition to talk. Father O'Toole told the whole story from the beginning, only making very little of his own share in it. Gertrude had relapsed into her abstraction, and heeded nothing.

They were now completely off the track, and had no indication to guide them further. Letters and newspapers rarely penetrated to Glen-pass. To remain there would help them nothing.

The old lady was a good deal softened since her retirement into obscurity; her expenses were lessened, whilst her income remained much as it ever had been, — there was less strain upon her, and she shone amidst the few county families within reach with the reflected splendour of “her house in London, where she had entertained the noblest of the land !”

Gertrude had looked better in retrospect than in the time when she had been present,—

and her mild, conciliating conduct, had taken its effect when she was away. Gradually Mrs Donnelly had persuaded herself that she loved her daughter-in-law, and had always treated her with maternal kindness.

Miss Sophia, being absent, could not interpose spiteful speeches. There was nothing to mar Mrs Donnelly's reception, and she really felt quite pleasantly excited at seeing Gertrude again. Her story, too, was very interesting, and it gave her the glimpse of a possibility of seeing her son. She would have overwhelmed Gertrude with caresses, but Gertrude did not care to receive them. She wanted to hear how they had got on with Sir Lucius, but Gertrude sat quite silent, and could tell her nothing.

"We will start on our journey early to-morrow," said the priest. "We must go back to Dublin; we shall hear nothing until we are there."

Mrs Donnelly was anxious to keep them, but Gertrude did not seem to hear her.

The next morning old Mrs Donnelly took

an excellent farewell of Gertrude. She reminded her, with tears, that she would in all likelihood never see her again in this world, as her health would not allow her to travel. She took a retrospect of her own life, and of Gertrude's life, since she entered the family. The Donnelly rhetoric was never before so forcible or so flowery. There was, however, a touch of real feeling when she spoke of Gertrude's present condition. She assured her of her protection and benediction, and promised that, if the opportunity offered, she would do her best to restore Clarissa to her ; in conclusion, she expressed the approbation and esteem in which she held Gertrude !

When she had ended she presented her with one of " her ancestral rings " and an old-fashioned miniature of some female Donnelly, mounted as a brooch, and set in garnets.

" You promise not to keep Clarissa from me ? " said Gertrude, answering the only part of the harangue she had heard.

" I promise," replied Mrs Donnelly, so-

lemnly. Gertrude turned aside, like a wearied child, to mount the pony that had stood some minutes at the door.

"Farewell, Gertrude," said Mrs Donnelly, bestowing upon her a majestic embrace.

"Good bye, Mrs Donnelly," and Gertrude rode away without once looking back.

"I think we had better not return the way we came," said Father O'Toole. There is another road, and we may as well take it; there is the shadow of a chance they may have gone on the other side of the mountain to that we came by. We may hear something—let us try."

"Very well," said Gertrude.

Father O'Toole's benevolent intention in this was to divert Gertrude's attention, and to give her a hope that he did not in the least entertain himself; he was completely baffled, and had not an idea what to advise Gertrude to do when they reached Dublin.

The road by which they returned was, if possible, more lonely and thinly peopled than

the road by which they went. The first night they slept at a small hamlet ; the priest performed mass in the little chapel, and visited some sick people before he started the next morning.

A bad fever was going about ; many in that village were down with it, and the sight of the good priest was a great comfort to them. The next day at evening they reached a lonely farm-house, standing a little off the road-side. To judge from the stacks of corn, and ricks, and out-houses, it belonged to a farmer well to do in the world.

The priest entered the door to ask for a lodging. The farmer's wife, a comely middle-aged woman, came to meet him.

"Your reverence and the lady are welcome if the lady is not afraid of the fever. We have it in the house."

There was no alternative ; no other house was in sight, and the night was closing in. He determined not to mention the fact to Gertrude, and to start as early as possible.

The woman led the way into the kitchen, where her husband and the farm-servants were sitting round the hearth, grave and silent ; two maid-servants were spinning, and an aged woman knelt in a distant corner, telling her beads with great emphasis.

All rose when the strangers entered, and the best places on the hearth were given to them. One of the men went out to see after the ponies ; the servants put away their spinning, and assisted their mistress in getting supper. Suddenly Gertrude, who had as usual been sitting abstracted from all that was going on, started violently.

“ Hush !—Do you hear nothing ? ”

“ I hear nothing. Calm yourself, my daughter.”

Gertrude listened again—then, rising from her seat, went direct to a door hidden in the heavy shadow of the chimney corner.

She opened it, and saw by a dim rush-light a small room with a bed in one corner, and some one lying upon it. A young

child stood beside the bed, trying to smooth the tumbled bed-clothes; her back was to the door—she did not hear it open. With a single bound Gertrude sprang upon the child, and clasped it in her arms!

Neither of them spoke—they clung together, holding each other tight as though they were turned to stone in that embrace.

The priest stood in the doorway behind. He laid his hand gently upon her shoulder.

“Give God thanks, my daughter. This your child was dead, and is alive again—was lost, and is found!”

## CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEN Gertrude could think of anything beside Clarissa, she approached the bed where her husband lay. She placed her hand upon his forehead, and spoke very kindly to him,—but he did not seem in the least glad to see her! He moved his head away from her hand, and desired she would go away, as he wished to be left quiet. Calling Clarissa to him, he desired her to sit down and stop with him.

“But, Augustus,” said Gertrude, “I am sorry to find you ill—and I hope to nurse



you, and make you well again. I would have come sooner had I known where to find you."

"I dare say—you are *very* kind," replied Mr Augustus, in a sarcastic tone; "but I don't want you, and you may go away again. I did not send for you. Clarissa is as much of a nurse as I want, and she won't leave me—will you, Clarissa?"

"I shall not go away until you are quite well again. Clarissa may help me to nurse you, but she cannot do it alone—it would kill her. You forget how young she is."

"Go away yourself—I don't want to see you or to hear you. Go away, I say!"

Father O'Toole made Gertrude a sign to retire, and to take Clarissa with her, and then approaching the sick man, said, with an air of authority,—

"Come, Mr Donnelly—I am a doctor as well as a priest; let me see what is the matter with you. I think the devil has

entered into you at any rate, by the unchristian way you talk. But the devil comes in the way of my lawful calling—I see I shall have to deal with you both.”

“I am very ill,” said Mr Augustus, in a tone half pathetic and half ashamed.

“I dare say you are—and I dare say it is not your good deeds that have brought you to this pass. Just answer me a few questions, and let me see what is the matter with you; but if you are not a little better fashioned, I shall not let either your wife or your daughter come back to you.”

The history of the mystery of what had become of Mr Augustus and Clarissa was simple enough when it came to be known.

On leaving Bally-na-Sloe, Mr Augustus had accepted the invitation of one of Mr Fitz-Vashipot’s guests to stop a few days at his country house, which “few days,” Mr Augustus finding his quarters pleasant, had extended to many.

When he again continued his journey towards Glenmore he was beginning to feel ill, the electioneering' hospitalities of Mr Fitz-Vashipot and his friends having been on a scale of riotous living under which the constitution of the Prodigal Son himself must have broken down.

When Mr Augustus reached the farmhouse where he was discovered, he was too ill to go any further, and although the Irish are horribly afraid of infection, nothing could have been more generous than the conduct of the farmer and his wife, although their treatment of his case was enough to have killed him of itself. The farmer's wife insisted upon keeping the room at a stifling heat; she refused to have the window opened for a second, lest "the disease," as she called it, should spread abroad. For all medicine, she gave him a mixture of potheen and hot butter-milk; the effect of which was to keep Mr Augustus both sick and sorry. Luckily, he

had only been under this regimen, since the previous day. The delays under which Gertrude had so much fretted were actually the means of enabling her to find him at last.

The farmer and his wife, and all the household, exhibited the most lively sympathy with the meeting between Gertrude and her child. The strange accident that had brought all the parties to their lonely out-of-the-way house, seemed little short of a miracle; though, as Gertrude, and her husband and child, were all "heretics," a miracle did not seem exactly an orthodox solution.

Clarissa was looking thin and pale, and much older, although scarcely two months had elapsed since she quitted her mother to go upon her visit to Elvington Park.

"She has been like an angel," said the farmer's wife, "and the sense she has shown would have done credit to a councillor. She has nursed her father as if she had

been a blessed Sister of Charity, and she little more than a babe herself. Oh, but it is to babes that wisdom is promised!”

Clarissa was very quiet, and only kept close to her mamma, holding fast by her hand, as she sat on a little stool beside her knee.

Father O'Toole came at last out of the sick man's room, and taking Gertrude aside, said,—“Your husband has not the fever that is going about, though what it may turn to I cannot say. He is very ill, and far beyond any little skill of mine in the science of medicine. You must get him to Dublin for advice, whilst he is in a state to be removed. The good man here will lend you a cart with plenty of clean straw.”

“I wish,” said Gertrude, “you could pacify his mind towards me, so far as to allow me to nurse him; he has taken offence at me, as you may perceive, though my own conscience is clear towards him, except that I did not feel, I could not feel, so glad to

see him on his return from abroad as perhaps he expected; but I would try to forget the past. If he should get well, and take Clarissa from me again, what good will my life do me?"

The priest looked at her kindly and keenly, with a shrewd half-smile on his good-tempered face, and, shaking his head, said—

"I'll see if I cannot bring him to reason. He may have been not altogether right, but I have seen the best of women plague a man's life out—they *can* do it when they lay their minds to it!"

What the priest said to Mr Augustus was in private, with closed doors. The result appeared the next time Gertrude entered the room. Mr Augustus sat up in bed, propped up with pillows, and reaching out his hand to her with the air of a King Ahasuerus, he said—

"Well, Ger.—let bygones be bygones; it is your temper and your confounded insolence that has been the ruin of me, and driven me

from home. But to 'err is mortal, to forgive divine'—and so you may come and nurse me, and we will all live happy together. I restore your child, and will not again take her away. You seemed to despise me, and no man can stand that!"

"Well, Augustus," said Gertrude, "we must get you strong again as soon as possible, and then I hope we shall be more comfortable—it shall not be my fault if we are not!"

"Ah!" rejoined Mr Augustus, plaintively, "I am very ill—very. I think I shall soon be under the sod—I shall not trouble you long."

"Oh, you must not be desponding; I hope we shall soon have you well again. We are going to take you to Dublin early to-morrow morning."

Whilst she spoke Gertrude had already begun to reduce the room into something like order, and to allow a little ventilation to enter it. Augustus found himself more

comfortable, and the idea of the magnanimity he had exercised had a soothing effect upon his complacency. Gertrude put Clarissa to bed. She seemed but now to realise in its full extent all the horror of having lost her; all the sins and shortcomings of her husband had become mere dust in the balance, compared with the dreadful power he possessed to take Clarissa away from her again—and so long as he did not exert *that* he was most merciful. Securely had he riveted his yoke upon her now;—and yet at that moment she put forth a strength and power that she had never yet felt within her, to gain influence over him, and to endeavour to turn the inevitable necessity that was laid upon her—to good.

Now that he lay sick and helpless, she did not hate him. She felt within herself a consciousness that she had never yet taken her proper stand beside him. Now she assumed it, and accepted her lot as his wife; she made that act of voluntary adop-



tion which is needed with all duties before we can discharge them so as to touch the spring of life that lies within them; but, that spring once reached, the most bitter and distasteful of our duties become to us "a well of life springing up to everlasting life."

Mr Augustus was not a metaphysician, but he felt the difference between the wife he had found and the wife he had left. As far as outward acts of ministration went, the Gertrude of to-day was no better than the Gertrude of three months ago, but the difference of spirit was subtle and all-pervading.

Gertrude had fairly conquered, to its last ramification, the mistake she had committed, and which had so long and so cruelly pursued her in its consequences.

The next morning Gertrude, Father O'Toole, and Clarissa accompanied Mr Augustus to Dublin. He had had a good night's rest, and was somewhat better able to bear the

journey in the cart the good farmer had placed at his disposal, filled with clean straw and the best feather-bed. Well wrapped and well propped with pillows, Mr Augustus was as comfortable as circumstances permitted.

The farmer himself drove the cart, professing that he "had business of his own in Dublin city;" but that was a good-natured pretence, and the act itself went to swell the sum of the "unrecorded acts" of human kindness, which are more numerous than might be imagined from the general character of the world for wickedness.

## CHAPTER XXV.

ARRIVED in Dublin, Gertrude lost no time in procuring the best medical attendance; but the fine constitution of Mr Augustus appeared entirely shattered, he suffered from a complication of ailments that might have made him the hero of the well-known epitaph—

“ Afflictions sore,  
Long time I bore,  
Physicians were in vain.”

As soon, however, as he was able once more to travel, Gertrude persuaded him to return to London, instead of trying the hospitality of his uncle Sir Lucius.

In London, Gertrude resumed her old business, although the attendance upon her husband was a great drain upon her time and strength. After rallying for a few months, Mr Augustus relapsed into a confirmed invalid ;—he lost the use of his limbs, which of course rendered him a complete prisoner at home.

The constant presence of her husband, which had once been Gertrude's bugbear, was not nearly so bad when it really came to pass.

The constant call upon her for kindness and tenderness, produced, not love, but a very good substitute for it. Although the temper of Mr Augustus did not mend under his sufferings, his disposition did, and he regarded his wife with very edifying reverence and a real affection. As to Clarissa, she was a great comfort to both her parents.

Gertrude's trial had been fitted to her strength, as everybody will find their trials when they once honestly take them in hand.

Lady Southend continued to be Gertrude's staunch friend and patroness.

Old Simon Morley was won to the unheard-of generosity of—making his daughter a fixed allowance in money! Fortune he reckoned that she had entirely forfeited, but her industry won upon him to allow her a small sum “to set her mind at liberty,” as he phrased it.

Mrs Morley came several times to see her daughter, and was once more won over to forgive her son-in-law all his misdeeds, by his pleasant tongue and polite manners towards herself; but especially by the respect with which he now treated her daughter.

In this manner two years passed away. In the spring of the third year, which was very cold and the east winds constant, Mr Augustus took the opportunity of dying.

He “made a good end,” expressed himself penitently and gratefully to his wife, and expressed a hope that she would have a

happier life after he was gone than she had led with him. Singular to say, Gertrude felt dreadfully sorry at losing him; her life had become suddenly a blank—her occupation was gone. He had certainly been a great trouble to her; but we always love those most who call out our best qualities. Lady Southend lost all patience at what she called “Gertrude’s unreasonable regret for a worthless husband.” She declared that “why Providence had left him alive so long was both a mystery and an inconvenience to all concerned in him;” but Gertrude persisted in her sorrow in spite of her ladyship’s logic.

After her husband’s death Gertrude and Clarissa went to reside at The Cottage, and in her last days poor Mrs Morley realised the dream of her life, “to have some comfort with her daughter.”

Simon Morley junior and his wife went on in the even tenor of their way, paying the way with gold. It had not, however,

the faculty of soothing Mrs Simon's temper at the same time.

#### L'ENVOI.

We imagined that we had finished the history of Gertrude; but a report was spread in Dunnington (to be sure it was traceable to Mrs Simon) that the young tanner of whom mention has been made—whom Gertrude had scorned when a girl, and who had, out of admiration for her elegance, cultivated his taste and spent his money upon giving himself an education, but who never married—had shown a disposition “to come forward” and try his fortune once more with the fair cause of all his woe.

Gossips prophesied over their tea-tables that Mrs Donnelly would not remain a widow two years. Reports are often like the twilight that precedes the dawn, and come true in the end, although in the beginning they were only probable.

The young tanner *did* “come forward,”

and Gertrude, touched by his good qualities, and still more by his constancy, consented to marry him.

Simon Morley gave her his blessing and five thousand pounds, now that she was marrying a rich husband and did not need it.

Gertrude lived long and happily with her second husband. She had several children, but she avoided the error that had worked her so much suffering, and impressed upon them from their early years what are the  
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